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LITERARY

MISCELLANIES:

INCLUDING

A

DISSERTATION

ON

ANECDOTES.

A NEW EDITION, ENLARGED.

BY

I. D'ISRAELI.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR MURRAY AND HIGHLEY,

FLEET-STREET.

1801.

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LE Monde a beſoin de pluſieurs ſortes de Livres; il en f
s'occuper, et il en faut pour s'amuſer; et parcequ'il
gens que lors meme qu'ils ne liſent que pour delaſſer leu
ſouhaitent de rencontrer des choſes curieuſes, et qui ne ſoien
dignes de la curioſité d'un homme de lettres, il eſt bon qu'il
livres, qui ſans demander beaucoup d'attention, ni ſans etr
à la bagatelle, puiſſent procurer un delaſſement inſtructif.

BAYLE, Reponſe aux Queſtions d'un P.

THE World is in want of many kinds of Books; ſome are
to purſue our ſtudies, and ſome are requiſite to indulge ot
ments: and ſince there are perſons who, when they read only
tainment, wiſh to meet with curious matters, and not unwort
curioſity of a man of letters, it is proper that we ſhould
vided with books, which, without exacting ſevere thin
being devoted to trifling ſubjects, may readily afford us
tive recreations.

Luke Hanſard, Printer,
near Lincoln's-Inn Fields.

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PREFACE.

THESE Literary Miſcellanies have long been out of print, and being ſtill enquired after, I am encouraged once more to preſent them to the Public.

For the character, the aim, and the utility of works like the preſent, the Reader will find in the motto, on the oppoſite page, the opinion of one well experienced in Literature, who, while he was alive to literary wants, was moſt ſenſible to literary pleaſures. We know the affection of Johnſon for that pleaſing ſpecies of erudition, which combines with opinions, facts to confirm, to illuſtrate, and to entertain; and we now add the name of Gibbon, whoſe opinions throw a luſtre on all literary diſcuſſions, and who adviſes even the hardy ſtudent to have ever at hand Literary Miſcellanies.

I have read with utility the various opinions of Journaliſts, both foreign and domeſtic, on my publications. One of theſe has ſo well deſcribed my intention in theſe Miſcellanies, that I ſhall quote

his words. The Critic ſays, "The Eſſays, except that the language is more ſtudied, have the air of converſation among cultivated people, purſued not ſo much with a view to cloſe diſcuſſion, as to deliver what may be ſaid on any ſubject with brilliancy and point." If a writer may be allowed to ſuppoſe that he underſtands himſelf, (which however is an indulgence not to be granted to every one) I would ſay, that the Critic has ſkilfully deſignated the purpoſe and the freedom of theſe Eſſays. Another Critic has characteriſed theſe Eſſays as "being of that kind of amuſing miſcellaneous reading where there is no neceſſity for previous ſtudy, or for ſevere thinking in it's progreſs," and he condeſcends to wiſh for their continuation. As that Critic is a man of learning, his opinion will always be reſpectable, though it may not always be the dictate of the Graces. A third Critic has made an ingenious obſervation ſo much in favour of theſe kinds of literary recreations, that the Reader will be gratified by it's appoſite defence of works which the mere man of erudition is accuſtomed to contemn. I ſhall tranſcribe his words: "The writer of entertaining *Miſcellanies* is a more important character in human ſociety than the pride of erudition may be willing to allow. It has hitherto been cuſtomary to value an author in proportion to the duration of *Time* through which the intereſt

of

of his compoſitions is to extend; and thoſe are called the great writers who are read in every age by a dozen perſons, and are unknown in every age to the multitude. Surely however it would not be leſs juſt to adopt, as the ſtandard of menſuration, the extent of *Space* through which the intereſt of a compoſition is to prevail, to weigh off the maſs of *contemporary* againſt the maſs of *ſucceſſive* readers, and to aſſign the ſame quantity of value to the tutor of three brothers, as to the preceptor of the grandfather, the father, and the ſon. On this plan of appreciation, the diſperſers of knowledge may challenge compoſition with the diſcoverers of truth; and the amuſers of the toilette and the tea-table may contend for the myrtle with the ſuppoſed ſources of claſſical paſtime." Theſe are the elegant, and playful, and diſcriminating conceptions of a man of taſte verſed in literature.

In every republication of my literary Eſſays I have lamented the errors of juvenile compoſition. There are certain radical ones, which no ſubſequent corrections can ever rectify. In the preſent volume it were deſirable that ſome of the ſubjects had been on more uncommon topics; they had then perhaps been leſs uſeful, but more intereſting. Cardinal Bembo, to apologize for his juvenile compoſitions, employs a beautiful image: "Le Scritture non ingraviſcono, e non divengono Ca-

nute

nute con i loro Autori e Compoſitori; ma ſi rimangono nella loro età, e nella loro giovinezza ſempre; e noi ci mutiamo! Chi può a buona equità maravigliarſi, che i Campi, i quali produſcono di State utili frutti, habbino vani fiori di primavera generato?" Books do not gather ſtrength, and improve in wiſdom with their authors, but ſtill remain in their firſt ſtate, and ever in their early youth; but we ourſelves change! Yet who juſtly can wonder that the fields which produce in ſummer uſeful fruits, ſhould yield but vain and periſhable flowers in ſpring?

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A

DISSERTATION

ON

ANECDOTES.

PREFACE.

A DISSERTATION demands (and I confeſs it) a certain ſyſtematical regularity, which is above me. But a Diſſertation on Anecdotes is a thing ſo eccentric, that if, on the whole, my pages are not found to weary the reader, it is juſt that he ſhould have the candour not to complain, if it does not preciſely anſwer the idea he may form of a Diſſertation.

I am even deſirous, that this Eſſay may not be conſidered as deſtitute of connection, though at the

firſt glance it may thus appear. The work conſiſts not of a mere maſs of looſe anecdotes; theſe are given as ſketches of the manner in which various ſubjects may be conducted; and elucidate thoſe reflections on the nature of anecdotes, which, if they ſhall be found to be pertinent, is all of which I am ſolicitous. In my notes, I have taken a greater freedom of diſcuſſion; but this has been (to uſe the language of a maſter in literary compoſition) 'with the honeſt deſire of giving uſeful 'pleaſure.'

There is a ſingularity reſpecting the word *Anecdote*, which it is not here improper to notice. Anecdotes is an appellation given by ſcholars to MSS. which they diſcovered in libraries, and afterwards publiſhed. This term is ſtrictly according to its Grecian derivation ανεκδοτα, i. e. things not yet publiſhed. Thus Cicero, as Moreri obſerves, gave the name of Anecdote to a work which he had not yet publiſhed.

We have borrowed the uſe of this word, in its ordinary ſignification, from the French, who employ it for any intereſting circumſtance. In this

ſenſe

ſenſe Varillas publiſhed Anecdotes of the family of the Medicis.

Johnſon has defined the word, by ſaying, that 'It is now uſed after the French for a *biographical* 'incident; a minute paſſage of *private life*.' This confines its ſignification merely to *biography*; but anecdotes are ſuſceptible of a more enlarged application. This word is more juſtly defined in the Cyclopædia, 'a term which (now) denotes a relation 'of detached and intereſting particulars.' We give *anecdotes* of the art as well as the Artiſt; of the war as well as the General; of the nation as well as of the Monarch.

In the former edition of this Diſſertation, I expreſſed a wiſh to have a ſeries of ANECDOTES formed which would be found capable of illuſtrating any individual topic. Of the merit of ſuch a work I ſtill retain an exalted notion; of its difficulty, and perhaps of the penurious commendation which moſt readers would beſtow on it, I am not leſs convinced; and ſuch a Writer, however philoſophical, might ſtill have his diligence, rather than his talents diſtinguiſhed. Dr. Johnſon has made a remarkable

obſervation on this ſubject: 'I love Anecdotes. I 'fancy mankind may come in time to write all 'aphoriſtically, except in narrative; grow weary 'of preparation and connection, and illuſtration, 'and all thoſe arts by which a big book is made. 'If a man is to wait till he weaves Anecdotes 'into a ſyſtem, we may be long in getting them, 'and get but few, in compariſon of what we might 'get.'

I conſider this not as an objection, but as the higheſt approbation of the work I propoſed.

DISSERTATION, &c.

A WRITER of periodical criticiſm*, has given ſome obſervations on ANECDOTES, which, becauſe they echo the voice of ſeveral men of letters, it may not be improper to inveſtigate. The opinions of our critic, to me, appear erroneous, becauſe they regard anecdotes as only agreeable objects of literary amuſement. A writer ſhould correct others, or correct himſelf; I therefore hazard this eſſay. A diſſertation on anecdotes appears thorny; let us try if we cannot diſcover bloſſoms and flowers.

The critic ſays, 'Anecdotes are among the luxuries of literature;' and he is 'fearful that the mind ſhould be accuſtomed to them, and reject ſeverer diet.' I rejoice, however, to be informed, in the ſame paragraph, that, 'they ſtimulate the appetite for reading, and create it where deficient.'

I will not deny that anecdotes are to be placed among literary luxuries. The refinement of a nation influences the genius of its literature; we now

* The Britiſh Critic for July 1793, p. 324.

now require not only a ſolid repaſt, but a delicious deſſert. A phyſician, auſtere as Hippocrates; a Critic, rigid as Ariſtotle, are alike inimical to our refreſhments. We will not be fooled into their ſyſtems. We do not diſmiſs our fruits and our wines from our tables; we eat, and our health remains uninjured. We read anecdotes with voluptuous delight; nor is our ſcience impaired, or our wit rendered leſs brilliant.

It is not juſt to conſider anecdotes merely as a ſource of entertainment; if it ſhall be found that they ſerve alſo for the purpoſes of utility, they will deſerve to be claſſed higher in the ſcale of ſtudy than hitherto they have been.

Anecdotes ſeldom read with reflection.

All the world read anecdotes; but not many with reflection, and ſtill fewer with taſte. To moſt, one anecdote reſembles another; a little unconnected ſtory that is heard, that pleaſes, and is forgotten. Yet when anecdotes are not merely tranſcribed, but animated by judicious reflections, they recal others of a kindred nature: and the whole ſeries is made to illuſtrate ſome topic that gratifies curioſity, or impreſſes on the mind ſome intereſting concluſion in the affairs of human life.

The moſt agreeable parts of Hiſtory, conſiſt in its Anecdotes.

Hiſtory itſelf derives ſome of its moſt agreeable inſtructions from a ſkilful introduction of anecdotes. We ſhould not now dwell with anxiety on a dull chronicle

chronicle of the reigns of monarchs; a parish register might prove more interesting. We are not now solicitous of attending to battles, which have ceased to alarm; to sieges, which can destroy none of our towns; and to storms, which can never burst upon our shores. We turn with disgust from fictions told without the grace of fable, and from truths uninteresting as fables told without grace*. Our hearts have learnt to sympathise; and we consult the annals of history, as a son and a brother would turn over his domestic memoirs. We read history, not to indulge the frivolous inquisitiveness of a dull antiquary, but to explore the causes of the miseries and prosperities of our country. We are more interested in the progress of the human mind, than in that of empires.

A Hearne

* Romancers have existed in all nations, under the names of historians, from the notorious Geoffrey of Monmouth, to Jean le Maire, who in his Illustrations of Gaul, makes the French nation descend from the fugitive princes of Troy. This is not quite so marvellous, as the eccentric follies of several *modern* Irish antiquaries. Col. V..... has pushed his national researches as far back as the time of the deluge. Since he was so employed he might have gone further; for an old writer has even favoured us with the names of the *seven Irish Kings* who flourished *before Noah*.

Mr. T. Warton, in his observations on the Faëry Queen, notices one of Geoffrey's fables. This monk, in his account of the original state of Albion, has these words, 'Erat tunc nomen insulæ Albion quæ a nemine nisi a *paucis gigantibus* inhabitabatur.' A *few giants*, in that historian's opinion, were but of little consideration.

A Hearne would feel a frigid rapture, if he could diſcover the name of a Saxon monarch unrecorded in our annals; and of whom as little ſhould remain, as of the doubtful bones of a Saxon dug out of a tumulus. Such are his anecdotes!---A Hume is only intereſted with thoſe characters who have exerted themſelves in the cauſe of humanity, and with thoſe incidents which have ſubverted or eſtabliſhed the felicities of a people*.

Anecdotes

* There will always be antiquaries, to ſolace themſelves with the hope, that dull induſtry will compenſate for a total want of the energy of genius. Such will not diſcern when enquiry dwindles into minute inutility. The elegance and the reflection of Hume, are regarded with contempt by theſe unenlightened ſtudents; and they condemn the philoſopher, preciſely for what he is moſt to be commended, for not waſting his pages on reſearches, that reſemble conjectures, into our Saxon annals, which, if they could be known with accuracy, would not be more intereſting than the annals of the Abyſſinians, over which many a reader of taſte has groaned in the bulky volumes of Bruce. On the ſubject of ſuch remote antiquities, I tranſcribe a converſation recorded by Boſwell. On our antiquarian reſearches, Johnſon ſaid, 'All 'that is really *known* of the ancient ſtate of Britain, is con-'tained in a *few pages*. We can know no more than what 'the old writers have told us; yet what large books have we 'upon it, the whole of which, excepting ſuch parts as are 'taken from thoſe old writers, is all a dream, ſuch as Whita-'ker's Mancheſter.—I have heard Henry's hiſtory of Great 'Britain well ſpoken of; I am told it is carried on in ſeparate 'diviſions, as the civil, the military, the religious hiſtory; I 'wiſh much to have one branch well done, and that is, *the* '*hiſtory of manners*, of common life.' Robertſon anſwered, 'Henry ſhould have applied his attention to that *alone*, which 'is enough for any man.' Vol. iii. p. 122.

Anecdotes serve as materials for the History of Manners.

Hence the hiſtory of manners has become the prime object of the reſearches of philoſophers. How is this prominent feature in hiſtory to be depicted? The artiſt muſt not here draw at fancy, a beautiful or fantaſtical line. He muſt regard his object with minute attention, and reflect long on a thouſand little ſtrokes, which are to give the faithful reſemblance. The hiſtorian ſhould aſſiduouſly arrange the minute anecdotes of the age he examines; and oftener have recourſe to the diaries of individuals, than to the archives of a nation. Nothing ſhould eſcape his reſearch, though every thing is not to be reported*.

Various

* Antiquarian ſtudies begin to rank high in the mind of the philoſopher. They ſeem to be directed to the illuſtration, not merely of obliterated inſcriptions, but of ancient manners. We may obſerve of what importance, in this intereſting ſubject, are the memorandums of an individual, from the recovery of the book of the Maſter of the Revels, which Mr. Malone has been ſo fortunate as to obtain. We enter more fully into the genius of thoſe times, from ſuch publications, than from the ſuperficial accounts and fanciful conjectures of any modern writer. He who would penetrate further into theſe amuſing reſearches, muſt apply himſelf to a cloſe examination of thoſe 200 volumes of old plays which Mr. Garrick has depoſited in the Britiſh Muſeum; to a patient peruſal of innumerable MSS.; and to the collecting matter from the printed books of the times. We are ſtill in want of a work ſimilar to St. Foix's Eſſays on Paris—one of the moſt agreeable anecdotical productions which the philoſopher and the antiquary has yet produced.

Various Anecdotes illustrating the History of Manners.

To inform the world, that in the xvith century, biſhops only were permitted the uſe of ſilk; that princes and princeſſes only had the prerogative of wearing ſcarlet clothes either of ſilk or of wool; and that only princes and biſhops had a right to wear ſhoes made of ſilk;---ſuch anecdotes would appear trivial in the hands of a mere antiquary; but they become important when touched by a philoſophical hiſtorian. Theſe little particulars awaken, in the mind of Voltaire, an admirable reflection: he ſays, "All theſe ſumptuary laws only ſhew, that the government of theſe times had not always great objects in view; and that it appeared eaſier for miniſters to proſcribe than to encourage induſtry."

Had I to ſketch the ſituation of the Jews in the ninth century, and to exhibit at the ſame time the character of that age of bigotry, could I do it more effectually than by the following anecdote, which a learned friend diſcovered in ſome manuſcript records?

A jew of Rouen in Normandy, ſells a houſe to a chriſtian inhabitant of that city. After ſome time of reſidence, a ſtorm happens, lightening falls on the houſe, and does conſiderable damage. The chriſtian unenlightened, villainous, and pious, cites the trembling deſcendant of Iſrael into court for *damages*. His eloquent counſellor hurls an admirable philippic againſt this deteſtable nation of heretics, and concludes by proving, that it was owing to this houſe having been the interdicted property of an Iſraelite, that a thunderbolt fell upon the roof.

roof. The judges (as it may be ſuppoſed) were not long in terminating this ſuit. They decreed that God had damaged this houſe as a mark of his vengeance againſt the property of a jew, and that therefore it was juſt the repairs ſhould be at his coſt.

Perhaps it is to be acknowledged, that the judges were merciful, and the jew fortunate. To be condemned to rebuild a houſe, is better than to be burnt with ſome of its old wood.

I ſhall add one more inſtance which may prove, that it is alone by anecdotes the genius of an age or nation is thoroughly to be underſtood.

The French nation, before their ſingular revolution, diſplayed a ſplendid ſcene of refinement, of luxury, and of frivolity, which perhaps was never yet preſented to the eye of the philoſopher, on this theatre of the world. In reading the ſecret memoirs of that country (a ſcandalous chronicle, which was carried on for above thirty years) one gathers many curious particulars, which can only be found in theſe fugitive leaves. Religion was forbidden by the philoſophers, and politics by the government. They exhauſted their active and volatile genius, on the objects of taſte; taſte that they contrived ſhould be the image of both, for it had its hereſies, and its parties. The theatre, and the bookſeller's ſhop, formed the great concerns of the Pariſian. Voltaire was more to be dreaded, than the prime miniſter; and Mad. Clairon (their celebrated actreſs) appears to have enjoyed the ſovereignty of Paris.

Sometimes we obſerve, that a publication ferments a town for a week; the miniſter ſends the author to the Baſtile for a month: the book is publicly burnt, forbidden to be ſold, and every body has it by heart. The police ſometimes is ſo rigid as to put an embargo on all MSS.; to impriſon cenſors of books becauſe they ſuffered paſſages to be printed which appeared to the court of an offenſive nature; in a word, ſeveral printers are compelled to ſell their founts, and a diſmal barrenneſs appears in the literature of France.

Sometimes we perceive theatrical repreſentations to be the objects of miniſterial vengeance. They forbid a particular play, whoſe ſubject might be applicable to the moment; or even a particular paſſage of a play, which the malicious actor pronounced with emphaſis.*

I give

* On the 19th February, 1762, in playing Tancred, Mad. Clairon, when ſhe came to theſe verſes,

'On depouille Tancrede, on l'exile, on l'outrage,——
'C'eſt le ſort d'un Heros d'etre perſecuté—
'Tout ſon parti ſe tait; qui ſera ſon appui?
'Sa gloire—
'Un Heros qu'on opprime attendrit tous le cœurs—'

This ſublime actreſs made ſuch inflections of her voice, ſo noble and ſo penetrating, that all the audience recollected the event of that day, which was a lettre de cachet the Marquis de Broglio had received. His name flew from mouth to mouth (ſays my reporter) and the repreſentation was frequently interrupted by loud applauſes which were continually renewed.

The next day the houſe was forbidden to act the tragedy of Tancred, in conſequence of what had paſſed on the preceding repreſentation.

I give one ſtriking example of the national character at this period; and for this purpoſe I employ the following anecdotes.

Molé, a favourite actor, is taken ill, and is confined to his chamber; when this is announced from the ſtage, the gaiety of Paris ſuddenly lours with gloom. The next day his door is beſieged by enquiring crowds; his health is the converſation of all companies. It appeared as if Scipio lay confined, and the virtuous Romans paſſed their hours in melancholy anxiety, for the life of their protector. The phyſicians find Molé in an exhauſted ſtate, and preſcribe a free uſe of wine. This preſcription is ſoon known in the circles at Paris; and Molé finds two thouſand bottles of the fineſt Burgundy ſent to his houſe from various quarters. Molé at length recovers; all Paris rejoices and ruſhes to his benefit. Such was the public ardour, that it produced him the amazing ſum of 24,000 livres. Molé gratefully receives the valuable tribute of their applauſe; he was in debt, and the benefit formed all his fortune. How then does Molé apply his 24,000 livres? An Engliſhman would have purchaſed an annuity, or perhaps have paid his debts. Molé runs to the jeweller, takes its amount in brilliants, and gives them to his miſtreſs, who boaſts that ſhe wears all the honours of the public.

This ſerves to diſplay at once the frivolity of the nation, and of the individual. All Paris is concerned for the indiſpoſition of an actor, and all terminates in giving diamonds to an impudent brunette.

Hiſtories

Histories compared with Memoirs.

Of the eminent perſonages in hiſtory, there are many differing characters. We know well how the object will appear when ſeen through the coloured teleſcope of a prejudiced hiſtorian. The moſt impartial may not always be ſucceſsful in his delineations. An intelligent reader frequently diſcovers *traits* before concealed. He does not perceive theſe faint touches in the broad canvaſs of the hiſtorian, but in thoſe little portraits which have ſometimes reached poſterity. He acquires more knowledge of individuals by memoirs, than by hiſtories. In hiſtories there is a majeſty, which keeps us diſtant from great men; in memoirs, there is a familiarity, which invites us to approach them. In hiſtories, we appear only as one who joins the crowd to ſee them paſs; in memoirs, we are like concealed ſpies, who pauſe on every little circumſtance, and note every little expreſſion.

It is thus that ſuch works as Plutarch's Lives, Froiſſart's Chronicle, the Memoirs of Comines and Brantome, Burnet's and Clarendon's Hiſtories of their own Times, have ever allured curioſity, and gratified inquiry. There are indeed readers who, when they turn over the pages of hiſtory, indulge in the marvellous of romance. A viſionary perfection darts from their imagination, and throws around a brilliant deluſion. Their heroes are prince Arthurs; their heroines, Unas; their ſtateſmen, Merlins. It muſt be confeſſed, that in the mode in which hiſtory is frequently compoſed, there are ſufficient reaſons to render ſuch a ſyſtem plauſible.

ſible. One can hardly meet with the moſt natural event in the hiſtories of ſuch writers as Tacitus, of Strada, and of Mariana, but theſe refined writers are for deriving it from ſome profound policy, or intricate deception. In their ſtudious leiſure, it muſt have been with difficulty that they tortured their invention to ſuch a ſtretch; an impoſſibility in thoſe perſonages who acted in the tumult of affairs, and concuſſion of public events*. The hiſtorian frequently ſeems ignorant of that ſpontaneous ardour with which the moſt ſplendid actions are performed, and diſcovers a regular plot in the accidental combinations of fortune. Every ſtateſman who comes down to us as a Neſtor, I doubt was not the ſage we

* Crebillon the ſon, who ſacrificed his talents on ſome licentious Romances, in his Tanzai and Neadarne, C. 4. has made a judicious reflection on readers of hiſtory. I ſnatch this flower thrown among ordures. He writes, 'The reader 'of hiſtory paſſes his judgment on its heroes, not ſo much 'from what they ought to have done in the circumſtances in 'which they appear before him, as from what he concludes 'they might have done. He puts himſelf calmly and ſeriouſly 'in their place; and, diveſted of the paſſions which fired 'them, clears or condemns them, according to the ſucceſs of 'their enterprizes: but does not once enquire whether the 'circumſtances would allow them time to deliberate; or whether their impulſes would permit them even to glance at reflection. Among the various claſſes of readers, very few examine incidents with judgment; and moſt who have abilities 'for this are oftentimes very unjuſt.' I add a judicious obſervation of Patin, on this ſubject: 'The myſterious diſcovery of 'the deſigns of princes, renders a hiſtory valuable; but it muſt 'be founded on truth, and not on the imagination of an hiſtorian who affects continually to make a new diſcovery.'

we believe him to have been; nor every general, the Achilles he appears. The moſt eminent perſonages are not ſo remotely removed from the level of ordinary humanity, as the vulgar conceive. Tranſcendant powers are rarely required; tolerable abilities, placed conſpicuouſly, appear to great advantage; as a lighted torch held in the hand is too common an object to fix our attention, but that torch placed favourably on a hill, would excite our admiration. He who is perſuaded of this truth, will be more inclined to ſearch for the characters of eminent perſons in their domeſtic privacies, than in their public audiences; and would prefer the artleſs recitals of the valet de chambre of Charles I. to the elegant narrative of his apologiſt Hume.

An Anecdote reveals a Character.

A well-choſen anecdote frequently reveals a character, more happily than an elaborate delineation; as a glance of lightning will ſometimes diſcover what had eſcaped us in a full light. Some inſtances may enforce this obſervation.

Anecdotes which discover the Characters of eminent Men.

The character of Oliver Cromwell long exerciſed the hiſtorical talents of European writers. Some French academicians have drawn his character with admirable refinement; Gregorio Leti, amuſed with agreeable fictions; Raguenet tires with dry truths; at home volumes on volumes have wearied curioſity. All theſe writers would perſuade

ſuade us, that he was an artful mixture of the politician and the hypocrite. A ſingle anecdote lets us more into the genius of the man, than this multiplicity of volumes. When he was with ſome ſelect friends enjoying a convivial hour, a confidential ſervant enters, and announces a body 'of the 'Elect.'---'Tell them,' ſays Cromwell in the language of fanaticiſm---'Tell them we are ſeeking for the 'Lord---Theſe fools think,' continues he, looking under the table, 'that I am ſeeking for the Lord, 'while I am only ſeeking for the Corkſcrew.'

Does not this little anecdote at once preſent us with the artifices of his politics, and the hypocriſy of his religion?

The anecdote of the death of the gallant Sidney, reveals, with a marvellous force, the genius of chivalry: that genius, which was *valour* in the field, and *love* at court. The hand that led through the graceful dance the beloved ſovereign of his ſoul, while he was bleeding to death, could turn with a feeble, yet energetic power, the cruiſe of water from his pale and parched lips, to thoſe of his humble companion expiring at his feet.

We are more acquainted with the character of Sir Thomas More, by his jocularity on the ſcaffold, than by ſome lives which are to be read of him.

I ſhall cloſe this topic with a few anecdotical ſketches of ſeveral monarchs, who have formed epochas in the hiſtory of their nations.

We are delighted to attend Auguſtus amidſt the embarraſſing affairs of government, into his domeſtic receſſes. To ſee him the preceptor of his ſon;

to

to obſerve him at ſupper ſeated between Virgil and Horace, and to mark him with exquiſite wit eraſe one of his own tragedies. Virgil was afflicted by an aſthma, and Horace by a fiſtula lachrymalis. When Auguſtus was placed between them he uſed to ſay, not unpoetically, 'I am now between ſighs and 'tears.' This lover of the art, aſpired to become an artiſt; he wrote a tragedy called Ajax; but had the good ſenſe to perceive, that if born to be an emperor, he was not born to be a poet. One day he effaced with his ſponge the whole tragedy; when it was enquired after, he wittily anſwered, 'Ajax is dead, he has ſwallowed his ſponge;' alluding to a mode of death practiſed by the Roman gladiators, who frequently in deſpair ſwallowed their ſponges. Theſe little anecdotes ſhew the literary diſpoſitions of Auguſtus, whom perhaps (as other great monarchs who reſemble him) a cruel ſyſtem of politics alone had made a tyrant*.

Louis

* I ſay politics alone compelled Auguſtus to ſanguinary meaſures. We know that he would never cauſe enquiries to be made after the authors of certain papers which had been ſcattered in the ſenate, and loaded him with calumnies. When Tiberius wondered at his indifference, this great monarch anſwered, 'You think like a young man. Let them 'ſpeak ill of me, it is ſufficient for me that I know they can 'do me none.' Does this conduct of Auguſtus indicate him to have delighted in the effuſion of human blood? When he had attained power, he ſhewed the moſt amiable diſpoſition. It is ſaid of him, in comparing the commencement of his reign with its cloſe, it had been deſirable, that he had never been, or that he had never ceaſed to be emperor. Auguſtus is an eminent example of the force of the terrible genius of politics.

Louis XIV. merits the love of poſterity. The genius of his people, not his own, inſpired him with attempts inimical to the rights of mankind. When this monarch is deprived of that falſe glory which his adulators have thrown around him, he will appear to advantage, placed in the ſofter light of thoſe hours, which he devoted to the ſociety of the great men whom his ſplendid patronage had formed. Numerous anecdotes of this monarch, are eternal teſtimonies of his intellectual powers and his fine taſte. He loved the converſation of Boileau and Racine. He was not a mere auditor of their works; he admired them with exquiſite ſenſibility, and animadverted on them with juſt criticiſm; and we know that he detected ſeveral errors. The eye that could catch a Boileau and a Racine tripping, it muſt be confeſſed was of no ordinary quickneſs. Several of theſe royal converſations have been recorded. It is honourable for the ſatyrical bard, that he had the boldneſs frequently to ſpeak his ſentiments freely; and what is ſtill more honourable, his majeſty did not diſlike his frankneſs. I give the reader one or two intereſting anecdotes, relating to theſe two poets.

It is well known, that when Boileau read one of his epiſtles, in which are theſe fine verſes, deſcribing the Emperor Titus,

'Qui rendit de ſon joug l'univers amoureux;
'Qu'on n'alla jamais voir, ſans revenir heureux;
'Qui ſoupiroit le ſoir, ſi ſa main fortunée,
'N'avoit par ſes bienfaits ſignalé la journée'—

his Majeſty was enchanted, and made the poet repeat

repeat them thrice. At that moment, perhaps, he propoſed Titus for his model; ſuch was the force of poetry! The next day, he gave orders for war; ſuch was the power of politics! When the ſatiric bard, for the firſt time after the death of Racine, paid his reſpects to the king, Louis received him with affection. He ſympathiſed in the loſs; and added, in pulling out his watch, 'Remember, 'Boileau, I have an hour for you every week.'

I add one more anecdote, which brings us into his apartment. When the French Auguſtus was one day confined to his chamber, he ſent for Racine. The poet read with grace; and his Majeſty aſked him to take up ſome book. A life of Plutarch was propoſed. The king objected, becauſe of its old French. 'Will your Majeſty permit me 'to try a life?' ſaid Racine. The king conſented. Our poet took down a volume of Amiot, and turned his obſolete language into a beautiful ſtyle. Louis was in raptures; he roſe, and embraced the poet.

It is with difficulty I can perſuade myſelf, that Charles I. would have been a tyrant. The Eikon Baſilike, which I conſider as the memoirs of his heart, abounds with ſuch ſtrokes of natural feeling, that we cannot eaſily conceive a tyrant to have poſſeſſed them. I give in the note ſome intereſting paſſages from this work*. The following anecdote, which

* I cared, not to leſſen myſelf in ſome things of my wonted 'prerogative, ſince I knew I could be no loſer, if I might but 'gain a recompens in my ſubjects affections.' p. 2.

'Popular tumults are not like a ſtorm at ſea, which yet 'wants

which Mr. Malone reports from the memorandums of the Maſter of the Revels, tends to prove, that even in proſperity, he would not ſuffer his people to be inſulted by the language of deſpotiſm. The following lines were in a manuſcript play of Maſſinger;

> Monies? We'll raiſe ſupplies *what ways we pleaſe*,
> And force you to ſubſcribe to blanks, in which
> We'll mulct you as we ſhall think fit. The Ceſars
> In Rome were wiſe, acknowledging no laws;
> But what their *ſwords* did ratify—

I cannot

'wants not its terror; but like an earth-quake, ſhaking the 'verie foundations of all, then which nothing in the world 'hath more of horror.' p. 14.

'*More than the law gives me, I would not have, and leſs 'the meaneſt ſubject ſhould not.*' p. 24.

'I will ſtudie to ſatisfie my parliament and my people; 'but I will *never, for fear or flatterie, gratifie anie faction, how 'potent* ſoever; for this were to nouriſh the diſeaſe, and op- 'preſs the bodie.' p. 75.

'The ſens of the injuries don unto my ſubjects, is as ſharp 'as thoſe don to myſelf.—My afflictions griev mee not more, 'then this doth, that I am afflicted by thoſe, whoſe proſperitie 'I earneſtly deſire, and whoſe ſeduction I heartily deplore.— 'Yet I had rather ſuffer all the miſeries of life, and die many 'deaths, then ſhamefully to deſert, or diſhonourably to betrai 'my own juſt rights and ſovereigntie.' p. 109.

'I know the ſharp and neceſſarie tyrannie of my deſtroiers 'will ſufficiently confute the calumnies of tyrannie againſt 'mee.' p. 229.

'It is verie ſtrange, that mariners can finde no other 'means to appeas the ſtorm themſelves have raiſed, but by 'drowning their pilot.' p. 233.

I cannot do better than tranſcribe the words of Sir Henry Herbert: 'I have entered this, here, 'for ever to bee remembered by my ſon, and thoſe 'that caſt their eyes on it, in honour of king 'Charles, my maſter, who, readinge over the play 'at Newmarket, *set his marke* upon the place with 'his owne hande, and thes words,

'*This is too insolent, and to bee changed.*'

This anecdote, with others which might be given, and the whole of the eloquent Eikon Baſilike, ſtrongly indicate, that the inclinations of Charles were remote from tyranny. He was, indeed, firmly perſuaded, that a king had juſt powers, of which it was as neceſſary to be careful, as of the juſt rights of his people. Such was his conviction, that he preferred death, to what he conſidered ignominy.

I conclude this topic with an anecdote of the unfortunate Louis XVI. little known, but which forcibly characterizes the diſpoſitions of this monarch. In a converſation on the ſubject of Rouſſeau's works, he ſaid, that he wiſhed it were poſſible to annihilate the Emilius, on education; becauſe, in that book, the author attacks religion, diſturbs the ſecurity of ſociety, and the juſt ſubordination of citizens; it can only tend to render men unhappy.---But the ſocial contract has alſo a moſt dangerous tendency, obſerved a courtier.--- 'As for that,' he replied, in words which ought not to be forgotten, 'it is very different. It only 'attacks the authority of *ſovereigns;* that is *a ſubject*

'*proper to discuss.* There is much to be said; it is 'susceptible of controversy.'

Does not this anecdote reveal the dispositions of the monarch? It is curious to observe, that Charles I. lost his head, because he was tenacious of his rights, and Louis XVI. because he was ever prompt to yield them to his subjects. A striking testimony this, of the mad ignorance of the multitude, who know not either to govern others, or themselves*.

By Anecdotes we become acquainted with Human Nature.

If it is not too solemn a question for this light essay, I ask, in what manner is the knowledge of human nature acquired?

Of some extraordinary minds it has been said, that their knowledge is attained by that sublime conception, which surveys at one glance the species, and becomes as it were by intuition, familiar with the individual. A Shakespeare has certainly given the most forcible language and descriptions

* Patin has made an admirable reflection on the caprices of that many-headed monster, the people. These are his words: 'Indeed, the people know not what they would have, 'nor what they should have. *Plebs plerumque contra sua com-* '*moda certat.* The people neither understand nor follow their 'interests. They murmur against those who elevate them-'selves; and do not reflect, that when these fall, others will 'appear still more desirous of doing the same thing, or per-'haps, greater evils, and who can only succeed with new 'calamities to the people.'

deſcriptions to characters and ſituations, which never paſſed under his eye. Such phenomena in nature we admire; but who dare imitate? We gain our knowledge by the ſlow acceſſion of multiplied facts; theſe our reflection combines, and thus combined, they form what we call experience. Rochefoucault, when with ſuch energetic conciſeneſs he compoſed his celebrated Maxims, had ever ſome particular circumſtance, or ſome particular individual, before him. When he obſerved, that, 'It diſplays a great poverty of mind, to have only 'one kind of genius,' he drew this reflection from repeated *anecdotes* which he had collected in the perſons of Boileau and Racine*. It was a happy idea of Amelot de la Houſſaie, when he gave an edition of theſe admirable Maxims, to illuſtrate ſeveral from examples, or anecdotes, drawn from hiſtory. If they were all thus illuſtrated, by well-collected authorities, it would form not only a rich repaſt for amateurs of anecdotes, but impreſs more forcibly the ſolid ſenſe, ſometimes too cloſely compreſſed in theſe conciſe maxims†.

The

* See Curioſities of Literature, vol. ii. art. *Poets*.

† I will add an inſtance or two, in what manner Houſſaie has enforced ſome of theſe reflections.

Rochefoucault obſerves, 'In jealouſy there is leſs love 'than ſelf-love.' Which reflection Houſſaie illuſtrates by this anecdote taken from Tacitus.' 'Witneſs Rhadamiſtus, who 'threw his beloved wife into a river, that ſhe might not fall 'into the hands of another.'

The Duke obſerves, 'The art of ſetting off moderate qua-'lifications, ſteals eſteem; and often gives more reputation 'than real merit.' His commentator gives, on this obſerva-

tion,

The bulk of mankind indeed, when facts preſent themſelves to their contemplation, are incapable of contemplating. Ignorant of their utility, they only regard them as objects of idle amuſement. Yet the ſcience of human nature, like the ſcience of phyſics, was never perfected till vague theory was rejected for certain experiment. An Addiſon and a Bruyere accompany their reflections by characters; an anecdote in their hand informs us better than a whole eſſay of Seneca. Opinions are fallible, but not examples.

A writer elegantly declaims againſt the vanity of a poet; but when he judiciouſly gives a few of the innumerable inſtances of poetical vanity, we ſhall comprehend him with more certainty, and follow his reflections with the firm conviction of truth. Would he inform us, that innumerable little follies prevail in very great minds? Every opinion is diſputable. But we become perſuaded of its truth, when he reminds us, that Sir Robert Walpole, a great miniſter, was ambitious of being a man of gallantry; and that another great miniſter,

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tion, the following character from Tacitus: 'Poppæus 'Sabinus, of moderate birth, obtained the conſulſhip, and the 'honour of a triumph; and governed, for four and twenty 'years, the greateſt provinces, without any extraordinary me-'rit; being juſt capable of his employments, and in no man-'ner above them.'

I have been told of a more curious work of this kind, but have not ſeen it, written by one of our countrymen, long before Houſſaie's time. Dallington's Aphoriſms from Guiccardini amplified with authorities, and exemplified with hiſtorie. London, 1613. folio.

Cardinal Richelieu, was not leſs ambitious of being diſtinguiſhed as a poet; while the one was as awkward in his compliments, as the other in his verſes. In a word, the wife Elizabeth was a coquette. The ambitious Charles V. terminated his career by watch-making. Racine believed himſelf a politician.

When an author gives a character which ſtrikes by its ſingularity, an anecdote will ſerve to eſtabliſh the veracity of its exiſtence. Thus the character of the aſtronomer in Raſſelas, finely deſcribed by Johnſon, is a character founded in nature. With a wonderful ſublimity of genius, this ſtudent is repreſented with an imbecility little to be ſuſpected, that of believing himſelf inveſted with the power of regulating the ſeaſons. A ſimilar character was this of Poſtel. His Lectures were attended by ſuch crowds, that he was obliged to harangue his auditors at a window, the hall of the college at Paris not being ſufficiently large to contain them; yet this man, (otherwiſe ſo judicious) cheriſhed the extravagant folly of believing himſelf endowed with a ſupernatural reaſon. He hoped to convert all the nations of the earth, and had ever in mind the idea of creating an order, to be called the Knights of Chriſt; and for this purpoſe aſſociated with the Jeſuits, who expelled him when they perceived his diſtempered imagination.

We cannot therefore accumulate too many of ſuch little facts; I ſay facts, otherwiſe we may err in our deductions: as, when one part of a ſum is wrong, the total amount muſt infallibly be ſo. Facts are anecdotes, but anecdotes are not always facts.

It

It is only the complaint of unreflecting minds, that we collect too great a number of anecdotes. Why is human knowledge imperfect, but becauſe life is ſhort, and nature infinite? The man of moſt experience, ſtill finds that he has new characters to underſtand, old opinions to confirm, and knowledge to correct, as well as to acquire. Human nature, like a vaſt machine, is not to be underſtood by looking on its ſuperficies, but by dwelling on its minute ſprings and wheels. Let us no more then be told, that anecdotes are the little objects of a little mind.

Anecdotes lead the Mind into Reflections.

Anecdotes afford the moſt exquiſite inſtruction. They produce in an ingenious obſerver, thoſe leading thoughts which throw the mind into an agreeable train of thinking. A ſkilful writer of anecdotes, gratifies by ſuffering us to make ſomething that looks like a diſcovery of our own; he gives a certain activity to the mind, and the reflections appear to ariſe from ourſelves. He ſcatters unperceivably ſeeds, and we ſee thoſe flowers ſtart up, which we believe to be of our own creation. A few pages of intereſting anecdotes, afford ample food for the mind *.

* I quote the obſervation of a man of genius on this ſubject. Lord Bolingbroke ſays, 'When examples are pointed out 'to us, there is a kind of appeal with which we are flattered, 'made to our ſenſes, as well as our underſtandings. The in-'ſtruction comes then from our own authorities. We yield 'to fact, when we reſiſt ſpeculation.'

If we regard anecdotes as they are connected with the republic of letters, I do not hesitate to declare, that they offer the most exquisite gratification.

On Literary Anecdotes.

In literary biography, a man of genius always finds something which relates to himself. In the history of his fellow students, a writer traces the effects of similar studies; he is warned by their failures, or animated by their progress. He discovers that, like himself, the sublimest geniuses have frequently stretched the bow without force, and without skill. He is not displeased to find that Pope composed an epic, a tragedy, and a comedy; that the two first were burnt, and the comedy damned. La Mothe was so sensibly afflicted by the unfortunate fate of his first dramatic essay, that he renounced society, and buried himself in the melancholy retreat of La Trappe. He perhaps considered, that a condemned poet, would make an excellent penitent*.

Various Anecdotes illustrating Literary Topics.

From anecdotes a man of letters gathers the following particulars interesting to him.

It is curious to observe the first dawn of genius breaking on the mind. Sometimes a man of genius,

* These instances (and many similar ones of celebrated writers, might be added) I give, not from any petty malignancy of criticism, but with the intention of the writers of the holy Scriptures; who report the failings of *Saints*, that those of feebler powers may not want something to keep them from despair.

nius, in his firſt effuſions, is ſo far from revealing his future powers, that, on the contrary, no reaſonable hope can be formed of his ſucceſs. In the violent ſtruggle of his mind, he may give a wrong direction to his talents; as Swift, in two pindaric odes, and Dryden by an elegy, which have been unfortunately preſerved in their works. Sometimes he diſplays no talents, even among thoſe who are able to decide on them; his genius, like Æneas, is veiled by a cloud, and remains unperceived by his aſſociates. This was the caſe of Goldſmith; who was ſo far from diſplaying a fine genius, that even his literary companions, before the publication of his beautiful poems, regarded him as a compiler for bookſellers, not a writer for men of taſte. Sometimes, when an author diſplays an early genius, it is not expreſſed with all its force. Several have begun verſificrs, and concluded poets; perhaps this is no unjuſt idea of Pope.

Is a man of genius oppreſſed with domeſtic miſeries? Does he tread on thorns, while he cultivates flowers? he ceaſes to feel his own griefs, while he contemplates thoſe of his maſters. On the misfortunes of the learned, more than one volume has been compoſed*. The domeſtic perſecutions of a man

* Pierius Valerianus, has given a little book, intitled, *De infelicitate litteratorum*, which he wrote from his own ſituation, in which for many years he participated in the miſeries he recorded of other ſcholars. It was afterwards greatly enlarged.—A collection has been publiſhed at Leipſic, in 1647, intitled, *Analecta de calamitate litteratorum.* Several

man of genius are more frequent, and more formidable to his ſenſibility, than thoſe of a party or of the public. Exquiſite miſery! to feel the lacerations of the ſoul, from the objects to which it turns for repoſe and delight! An illiterate parent, who haraſſes the mild diſpoſitions of his philoſophic ſon, and counts, with all the anxiety of the father and the merchant, the hours he laviſhes on his ſtudies, has been an ordinary miſery of literary men. The father of Petrarch one day, in a barbarous rage, burnt his ſmall but invaluable library before his face; and Voltaire, with a thouſand other writers, have broken their fathers' heart by their conſtant application to poetry, and utter neglect of the law *. Can we read without indignation, that the family

other works on this ſubject have appeared. Dr. Wendeborn obſerves, 'a great many lives of learned Engliſhmen might be collected, to enlarge a book which was written in Latin on literary men, who were unhappy, and ſtruggled with misfortunes.' View of England, vol. ii. p. 8.

* Hume ſays, in the ſlight ſketch he gives of his life, 'My 'ſtudious diſpoſition, my ſobriety, and my induſtry, gave my 'family a notion that the law was a proper profeſſion for me; 'but I found an inſurmountable averſion to every thing but 'the purſuits of philoſophy, and general learning; and 'while they fancied I was poring upon Voet and Vinnius, 'Cicero and Virgil were the authors which I was ſecretly de-'vouring.'

Young has deſcribed the character of ſuch a parent as Deſcartes with his uſual vigour of wit:

Lampridius, from the bottom of his breaſt,
Sighs o'er one child, but triumphs in the reſt.
How juſt his grief! one carries in his head
A leſs proportion of the father's lead.

The

family of the great Deſcartes were inſenſible to the luſtre his ſtudies reflected on their name? They grievouſly lamented, as a blot, which could not be effaced from their arms, that Deſcartes, who was born a *gentleman*, ſhould become a *philoſopher!* This elevated genius was even denied the ſatisfaction of embracing his expiring parent; while his dwarfiſh brother, whoſe mind muſt have been as diminutive as his perſon, ridiculed his philoſophic relative, and turned to advantage his philoſophic diſpoſitions. The ſublime Bacon generally ſat at the end of his table in a ſtate of abſtraction, while at the other his dependants cheated, ridiculed, and loaded him with infamous aſperſions. We muſt not look into the domeſtic receſſes of men of genius, if we would conſider them as beloved or happy.

The purpoſe of this Diſſertation is an attempt, however feeble, to exhibit the utility, and the delight of anecdote in the inveſtigation of any topic. I therefore ſhall not wander from it, in ſketching ſeveral ſubjects relative to literary men, compoſed of reflections, illuſtrated by anecdotes.

The *dunghill breed* of men a diamond ſcorn,
And feel a paſſion for a *grain of corn*;
Some ſtupid, plodding, money-loving wight,
Who wins their hearts by knowing black from white,
Who with much pains exerting *all* his ſenſe,
Can range aright his ſhillings, pounds, and pence.
The booby father craves a booby ſon,
And by Heaven's bleſſing thinks himſelf undone.

It has been ſaid, that Envy is only the offspring of little minds. This has been repeated from age to age; but it is one of thoſe popular prejudices which are not the leſs falſe, becauſe they are of a remote date. Of literary jealouſy, to ſelect inſtances were difficult, becauſe of their abundance. Why does Plato never mention Xenophon, and why does Xenophon inveigh with bitter crimination againſt Plato and ſtudiouſly collects every little report which may detract from his fame? They wrote on the ſame ſubject! Why did Swift and Milton treat with contempt the rhymes of Dryden? Why did Corneille, tottering on the grave, when Racine conſulted him on his firſt tragedy, adviſe the author never to write another? Why does Voltaire continually detract from the ſublimity of Corneille, the ſweetneſs of Racine, and the fire of Crebillon? Why was the admirable La Fontaine not even mentioned by the French Horace in all his works? Why muſt poſterity lament that the name of Young is to be found in the Dunciad of Pope? Why did Boccaccio, in ſending to Petrarch a copy of Dante, make an apology for it? and why did the latter, in his anſwer, ſpeak coldly of Dante's merits*?

It

* Why is Waller ſilent on the merits of Cowley, why not give one verſe to return the praiſe with which Dryden honoured him? Could not Milton extort his due ſhare of applauſe? No! he is warm in his panegyric on Beaumont and Fletcher, on Sandys, Ware, and D'Avenant; becauſe of ſome of theſe their ſpecies of compoſition was different from his own, and the reſt he could not fear. See curſory remarks on ſome of the antient Engliſh poets. London, 1789.

It is difficult to repreſs our indignation at this envy of writers, who ſhould look for that ſupport from each other, which is ſometimes unjuſtly denied them by the world. In contemplating on this ſubject, we are ſtruck with the ſame horror as if, looking into a neſt of doves, we beheld vipers hiſſing at each other.

We muſt feel another kind of indignation, which falls not upon authors, but their readers. Men of genius have complained, that their acquaintance are the laſt perſons in the world, whoſe affections they can win. I collect ſeveral teſtimonies.

When the voice of the public ſhall inform the friends of a man of genius, how much he merits their affection, they will be incapable of beſtowing it. A familiar acquaintance with an author (obſerves Hume) may diminiſh the applauſe due to his performance. It was the eternal miſery of Rouſſeau, that his friends did not know how much he merited their affections. On this ſubject, in the 'Thirty Letters,' the acute Mr. Jackſon has judiciouſly obſerved, that 'none judge leſs favour-'ably of an author than his intimate friends; their 'perſonal knowledge of him, as a man, deſtroys 'a hundred deluſions to his advantage as an au-'thor.'——Monnoye, in a letter written when he firſt made his appearance as a writer, has deſcribed the ſituation of a young author with ſenſibility and truth. Theſe are his words: 'You know the 'town I inhabit: one of the greateſt faults a man 'can have, it ſeems, is a little merit; a multitude of 'enemies is the certain fate of all thoſe who appear

'desirous of distinguishing themselves. You have 'read my poem on the abolishment of duels. They 'said, at first, that it was good for nothing; and 'after the Academy had crowned it with their prize, 'pretended it was not written by me.'

A French orator exclaims, 'It is true, that a su-'perior genius finds himself sometimes esteemed 'during his life-time; but he must generally seek 'for it, at the distance of three hundred leagues.' I transcribe, on this subject, what the ingenious author of the Mirror writes, perhaps prompted by his own feelings. In mentioning the work he says, 'The 'place of its publication, was in several respects, dis-'advantageous. There is a certain distance at which 'writings, as well as men, should be placed, in order 'to command our attention and respect. We do 'not easily allow a title to instruct or to amuse 'the public, in our neighbour, with whom we 'have been accustomed to compare our own abi-'lities. Hence the fastidiousness with which, in 'a place so narrow as Edinburgh, home produc-'tions are commonly received; which, if they are 'grave, they are pronounced dull; if pathetic, are 'entitled unnatural; if ludicrous, are termed low*.' So just is this last observation, that I cannot forbear noticing,

* Metastasio says, vol. i. p. 181.—"I am more and more convinced every day, that prophets and poets are seldom honoured in their own country."——This has been an evil felt, we observe, by every man of genius placed in a provincial town. It was so even among the ancients. See Martial's complaint. Pliny observes on Protogenes the Rhodian painter, that his countrymen would not take any notice of his works till Apelles, visiting him at Rhodes, esteemed his pictures at a high rate.

noticing, that when Rouſſeau publiſhed at Neufchatel ſome little compoſitions, they were not reliſhed by his good provincial friends: a few years afterwards, they contributed to the literary pleaſures of Paris. Not the qualities of his writings, but thoſe of his readers, were altered.

If theſe anecdotical obſervations are reliſhed, another ſpecimen will not diſpleaſe.

Dr. Joſeph Warton, who has employed anecdotes with ſuch pleaſing effect in his Eſſay on the Genius of Pope, has given the following one of a celebrated poet.

'So little ſenſible are we of our own imperfections, 'that the very laſt time I ſaw Dr. Young, he was ſe-'verely cenſuring and ridiculing the falſe pomp of 'ſuſtian writers, and the nauſeouſneſs of bombaſt.'

I purſue this ſpeculation, intereſting to literature.

Of Seneca, it is obſerved in the Perroniana, that he himſelf writes againſt pointed periods, and the epigrammatic ſtyle. Lipſius was extravagantly fond of a certain conciſe ſtyle; his epiſtles offend by a continued affectation of this kind; yet he not only cenſures brevity, and declares it to produce a dry jejune mode of writing, but minutely enters into its numerous defects. Cicero very warmly reprehends that abuſe, which the Greeks were accuſtomed to caſt on their adverſaries, frequently paſſing from the cenſure of the work, to ſatirizing the author himſelf. But Cicero has left poſterity not a few ſpecimens of the abuſive ſtyle, and the groſſeſt perſonalities. While Plato inveighs againſt poetry, he proves himſelf a great poet. Thus Malle branche declaims againſt the ſeductive charms of a

fine imagination, while his own was moſt beautiful and deluding. Boccalini, as Bayle obſerves, makes Apollo give very judicious advice to an author, who was hanged for too freely ſatirizing ſome noble families; but our ſage adviſer himſelf loſt his life for having written too freely concerning the Spaniſh court *.

Burnet, in the 'Hiſtory of his own Times,' is continually appealing to God and his conſcience for the veracity of his work. Theſe are ſome of his expreſſions: 'I ſolemnly ſay this to the world, and 'make my humble appeal upon it to the great God 'of truth, that I tell the truth on all occaſions'---'I reckon a lie in hiſtory to be as much a greater ſin 'than a lie in common diſcourſe, as the one is like 'to be more laſting and more generally known than 'the other.' Our biſhop had warm prejudices, and a lively

* I give the obſervation here alluded to. He ſays, that a judicious hiſtorian imitates the grape gatherer: he waits till time has matured the harveſt; that is, from ſpeaking of facts, till thoſe who have committed diſhonourable actions are no more, and their children have not the power of avenging them.

Marville gives the following account of the ſingular death of our ſatiriſt. He ſays, 'Boccalini was the author of La 'Pietra di Parragone, a ſatire againſt the Spaniards. Too 'much wit and paſſion, occaſioned our author to be *facchettato*; 'that is, he was ſo heartily beaten by the Spaniards, that he 'died a few hours afterwards. This is an invention of the 'Italians to murder a man, without ſpilling his blood, by 'beating him on the back with *bags of ſand*. The wounds 'theſe give are incurable; a gangrene takes place, and death 'concludes this mode of aſſaſſination.'

This will ſerve as an inſtance of that inventive genius of aſſaſſination, which once characterized the Italians; and which has not entirely deſerted their ordinary language, as well as their paſſions.

a lively imagination; indulging theſe to an exceſs, he left far behind him the ſober truth of 'a faithful 'chronicler.' Mr. Leſly, who knew him familiarly, has deſcribed his character, by ſaying, 'He was 'zealous for the truth, but in telling it, he always 'turned it into a lie*,' perhaps, Leſly too was unjuſt;

* The following advice to the reader of Burnet's Hiſtory, forms an ingenious epigram. I give the Latin original, with its tranſlation:

Monitum lectori, quomodo legenda ſit Burnetti Hiſtoria ſui Temporis, et pro verâ admittenda.

Leguntur Hebræo verſo ordine Literæ,
Cancrique, ſerpunt in contrarium gradus;
Tenella virgo, ſi quem amat perdité
(Ea eſt proſervitas) fugit, tanquam oderit;
Quemque odit Aulicus, (tanta eſt urbanitas)
Amore abundans quaſi ſtudioſus colit:
Ut Hebræa legi, cancros ut gradi vides,
Tenella ut odit virgo amat ut Aulicus,
Hâc lege Lucianus hiſtoriam ſuam,
Suamque Burnettus ipſe veram dixerit.

Attempted in Engliſh.

Advice to the reader of Burnet's Hiſtory of his own Time, how it may be read, and admitted for truth.

The Hebrew characters are backward read,
The crab-fiſh backward crawls with aukward tread;
The tender virgin ſcorch'd by Cupid's fires;
Will ſeem to hate the man ſhe moſt deſires;
The ſubtle courtier moſt obſequious waits,
And moſt pretends to love, whom moſt he hates.
As Hebrew books are read, as crab-fiſh move,
As virgins hate, and as ſly courtiers love.
Juſt ſo may Lucian, nay, and Burnet too,
Each boldly vouch their hiſtories are true.

Burnet

unjuſt; Burnet wrote many truths, and ſome falſehoods which he thought truths.

Cowley, in his Ode to Wit, has the following ingenious ſtanza; which, however, is but a ſplendid ſatire on his own witty poetry. He ſays, Wit is not

——To adorn, and gild each part;
That ſhews more coſt, than art.
Jewels at noſe and lips, but ill appear;
Rather than all things wit, let not none be there.
Several lights will not be ſeen,
If there be nothing elſe between;
Men doubt, becauſe they ſtand ſo thick i' th' ſky,
If thoſe be ſtars, which paint the galaxy.

It will not be denied, that the indiſcreet muſe of Cowley wore jewels both at her noſe and lips.

Thus

Burnet has been called the Engliſh Varillas: and the character of the latter writer, attacked by the learned of all nations, and particularly in this country by the ingenious Dr. King, may ſerve to illuſtrate that of Burnet.

Varillas has been accuſed of quoting memoirs which never exiſted, or in which the facts he relates are not to be found. It is, however, very true that Varillas had read an aſtoniſhing number of original memoirs. The life of this man was conſumed in his ſtudy; and it was his boaſt, that for thirty years he had not dined from home. He had read ſo many manuſcripts, that his ſight failed him, and he loſt the uſe of one eye. By candle-light he could not read; and it was his cuſtom to cloſe his windows at duſk, and then to *write* his Hiſtories. But as he could not authenticate his anecdotes, by conſulting the memoirs which had been furniſhed to him from the King's Library, in which there is a collection from 8 to 10,000 MSS. he truſted to his memory. This naturally produced

Thus alſo Dr. Johnſon, in ſome admirable verſes*, cenſures thoſe writers in whoſe plays,

> ———Cruſh'd by rules, and weaken'd as refin'd,
> For years the power of Tragedy declin'd;
> From bard to bard the frigid caution crept;
> Till *Declamation roar'd*, while *Paſſion ſlept*.

In the tragedy of Irene it muſt be acknowledged that 'declamation roars, while paſſion ſleeps.'

Dr. Blair obſerves of Shafteſbury, 'what is moſt wonderful, he was a profeſſed admirer of *ſimplicity*; is always extolling it in the ancients, and abuſing the moderns for the want of it; though he departs from it himſelf as far as any one modern whatever.'

Sir John Hawkins very liberally cenſures the ſtyle of Addiſon, which is pleaſant enough!

In a word, to conclude this topic, I have obſerved a hundred French writers declaim againſt the abuſe of what they ſo happily call *le bel esprit*; while they are themſelves employing it in every period---a hundred Engliſh authors abuſing the French, while

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produced his confuſion in facts: what belonged to one kingdom was given to a neighbouring country; what related to one perſon was transferred to another.

It is poſſible to ſuppoſe that neither Varillas nor Burnet intended to impoſe on the world. But from theſe anecdotes we may inforce a very important maxim, that an Hiſtorian muſt not write as *facts* what he only collects from *memory*. If he does otherwiſe, he is not to be truſted; for however honeſt may be his intentions, it is certain that he will not only impoſe on his reader, but impoſe on himſelf. Let it alſo be remembered, that he who relies on his memory, is frequently the dupe of his imagination.

* Prologue ſpoken at the opening of Drury-Lane Theatre in 1747.

while at the ſame time their work and their ſtyle are alike an imitation of them.

Were I to make the following obſervation, the following anecdotes ſhould be attached to it.

A man of genius conſumes one portion of his life in painful ſtudies; another in addreſſing his labours to the public, and combating with rivals; in the laſt inconſiderable remnant of life, he perhaps begins to enjoy that public eſteem for which he had ſacrificed its ſolid conſolations, his fortune, his tranquillity, in a word, his domeſtic Lares. Amidſt the funereal cypreſs he ſees the green leaves of the laurel. He reſembles a veteran ſoldier, who, at the moment he is carried from the trenches in an expiring ſtate, receives the honours of promotion. When once removed from the public and his rivals, they refuſe him nothing.

Every little thing that belonged to this man of genius becomes an invaluable relic. The living Shakeſpeare experienced little of that adoration which has been repeatedly paid to him by poſterity; nor imagined that the *Mulberry Tree* which he planted (ſuppoſing he really did plant it) would have been ſought after with as much eagerneſs as a pious Catholic ſhews for a piece of the real croſs. Thomſon never conjectured that his *old chair** would

* At a feſtival in honour of this Poet of the Seaſons, the chair in which it is ſuppoſed he compoſed part of his Seaſons, was produced, and communicated a poetic rapture to the admirers of the Muſe, aſſembled on this occaſion. Even honeſt Aubrey could admire the *chair* of a man of genius. Our antiquary ſays of Ben Jonſon, in the curious manuſcript which Mr. Malone

would have been beheld with the eyes of adoration by his countrymen. Rabelais, among his drolleſt imaginations, could not have conceived that his *cloak* would have been preſerved in the univerſity of Montpellier, for future doctors to wear on the day they took their degree.

Such is the public! long miſled by the malice of rivals, their deciſions are capricious, irreſolute, and unjuſt. Poſterity, while it cenſures the paſt age, commits the ſame injuſtice to its cotemporaries. It exhauſts its admiration on an old tree, an old chair, and an old cloak, while the modern Shakeſpeares, Thomſons, and Rabelais (if there ſhould be any) would paſs unobſerved by its injudicious applauſe.

I ſhall add one more ſketch of a literary topic.

Men of genius catch inſpiration from that of others. Their mind is not always prepared to pour forth its burning ideas; it is kindled by the ſparks ſtruck by colliſion from the works of great writers. It was thus Cicero informs us that he animated his eloquence by a conſtant peruſal of the Latin and Greek poetry. Poets awaken their imagination by the verſes of other poets. Malherbe, Corneille, and Racine, before they applied themſelves to compoſition, put their mind into its proper tone, by repeating the glowing paſſages of their

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Malone has given in his account of the Engliſh Stage, 'I have 'ſeen his ſtudyeing chaire which was of ſtrawe, ſuch as old 'women uſed; and as Aulus Gellius is drawn in.' Aubrey ſhould properly have had ſuch 'a ſtudyeing chaire,' for he was 'an old woman.'

their favourite maſters. The moſt fervid verſes of Homer, and the ſweeteſt of Euripides, enriched the memory of Milton*. It is related of Boſſuet, that before he compoſed a funeral oration, he was accuſtomed to withdraw for four or five days into his ſtudy, and read Homer. When aſked the reaſon of this practice, he expreſſed himſelf in theſe verſes,

——Magnam mihi mentem, animumque,
Delius inſpirat vates——

Marville ſays, the famous orators in the pulpit and at the bar, of his time, uſed to read the fineſt paſſages of the poets, to ſwell out thoſe ſeeds of eloquence which nature had ſcattered in their ſouls. Thus alſo, a celebrated preacher boldly copied Seneca, the tragedian, in the violent paſſions he aſſumed; and one leſs ardent, but more tender, interwove in his ſermons pieces taken from Ovid. One pleader would only breathe the fury of Juvenal; another diſplayed the graceful turns which he had borrowed from Horace.

Collections of Anecdotes serve as an excellent Substitute for the Conversations of eminent Writers.

We now turn to the conſideration of thoſe literary collections, which give the anecdotes and converſations of celebrated men.

The converſations of ſcholars have been collected in ages of literature: But not having been formed with that care and ſelection they merited, has

* 'Milton,' (ſays Richardſon) 'had read and ſtudied all 'the greateſt Poets, and had made all his own; Homer he 'could almoſt repeat without book.'

has been the only cauſe of their falling into diſrepute. With ſuch ſubſtitutes we are enabled, in no ordinary degree, to realiſe the ſociety of thoſe who no longer exiſt; and (if I may hazard the expreſſion) to become more real cotemporaries with the great men of another age, than were even their cotemporaries themſelves.

Are we not all deſirous of joining the ſociety of eminent men? It is the wiſh of even the illiterate. But the ſenſibility of genius ſhrinks tremblingly from the contact of the vulgar, and the arrogance of learning will not deſcend to their level. They prefer a contemplative ſilence, rather than incur the chance of being inſulted by their admiration.

Few therefore can be admitted to their converſations. Yet when a man of genius diſplays converſible talents, his converſations are frequently more animated, more verſatile, and, I muſt add, more genuine than his compoſitions. Such literary converſations may be compared to waters which flow from their ſource; but literary writings reſemble more frequently an ornamented fountain, whoſe waters are forcibly elevated in artificial irregularities, and ſparkling tortuoſities.

Theſe collections are productive of utility. We learn from a little converſation accidentally preſerved; a fortuitous hint caught as it fell; and an obſervation which its author might never have occaſion to inſert in his works, numberleſs myſteries in the art of literary compoſition; and thoſe minute circumſtances which familiarize us to the genius of one

one whom we admire, and whom ſometimes we may aſpire to imitate.

Obſervations on the delight of Literary Hiſtory.

Literary hiſtory has indeed been purſued with a paſſionate fondneſs by the firſt ſcholars. I will not wander from home on this occaſion, though our neighbours far ſurpaſs us in this pleaſing ſpecies of erudition. Dr. Johnſon has ſaid, 'It was what he 'moſt loved.' It is curious to obſerve, that he begins his Biography of our Poets, with a complaint of 'the penury of Engliſh biography.' It is the regret of one who felt all its charms, and who perhaps lamented that he could not much improve its miſerable fund. Dr. Warburton has called literary hiſtory, 'the moſt agreeable ſubject in the world.' Dr. Warton, in his Eſſay on the Genius of Pope, has preſented us with an admirable ſpecimen in what manner literary anecdote may be introduced for the illuſtration of an author, and delight of the reader. Peliſſon, in his hiſtory of the French Academy, has made an obſervation on literary hiſtory, which will be echoed from the boſom of every man of letters. He writes, 'Had we the particulars re-'corded of what paſſed between Auguſtus, Me-'cenas, and the celebrated wits of their age, I 'know not whether we ſhould read ſuch an hiſtory 'with leſs curioſity and delight than that of the 'wars, and affairs of the government of thoſe times. 'Perhaps (to go ſtill further) we ſhould not read it 'with leſs utility and inſtruction: we, I ſay, to 'whom Fortune has given, neither armies to con-'duct,

'duct, nor politics to govern; but only ſtudy, 'converſation, and the domeſtic virtues.' Literary anecdotes carry with them ſo powerful an attraction, that we conſult with pleaſure ſuch works as the Athenæ Oxonienſes of Anthony Wood, though compoſed in a hard, dry, and repulſive ſtyle; and Hawkins's Life of Johnſon, whoſe genius revived that of the four Wood. Mr. Boſwell, in his Life of Johnſon, has exquiſitely gratified the amateur of literary anecdotes; a work almoſt as ſingular in its nature, as its merit.

Literary Biography cannot be accomplished without a copious Use of Anecdote.

Without the uſe of literary anecdote, it is in vain to attempt literary biography.

A biographer ſhould be more ſolicitous of diſplaying the genius of the man whoſe hiſtory he writes, than his own. He ſhould not obtrude his own talents on the eye, ſo much as thoſe of the perſon whoſe life he records. Some have written the life of another, merely to ſhew that they were themſelves fine writers.

When Richardſon, the father, gave the Life of Milton, he did not compoſe it in the ordinary ſtyle of biographers. If we take away ſome of his excentricities, his manner is admirable. It is very poſſible to write the life of a poet, a lord chancellor, and a general, almoſt in a ſimilar ſtyle*. What is the conſequence

* It was ſaid of Mallet, after he had given the life of Bacon, and who pretended to be employed on that of Marlborough,

ſequence of ſuch idle biography? With much trouble we find, at length, that the genius of either remains yet to be known. One poet is made to reſemble another; and, what is worſe, a poet reſembles a lord chancellor. Richardſon, a Miltonic enthuſiaſt, was beſt qualified to give the biography of Milton an enthuſiaſt. He did not remain ſatisfied with collecting the information which induſtrious enquiry produced, but he ſtudied to give the character of Milton from his own deſcriptions. He connected, with an ardour of reſearch, for which poſterity ſhould be grateful, from all his works, in verſe and in proſe, the minute circumſtances, and peculiar ſentiments, which our ſublime poet had recorded of himſelf.

In reading this ſketch of the manners, and the genius, of Milton, we ſeem to live with him; we participate in the momentary griefs which afflicted him, and the momentary triumphs in which he exulted. We join the old blind bard at the door of

---

borough, that as he had forgotten that Verulam had been a philoſopher, he would probably forget that Marlborough had been a general. He did better. He took £.500 for his Life, and never wrote a page of it. By the way, this has been no uncommon practice among authors. Some have publiſhed a variety of titles of works, as if they were ready for the preſs; but of which the titles only had been written. Paſchal, who was hiſtoriographer to Francis I. forged ſuch titles, that the penſion which he received for occupying himſelf on the French hiſtory might be continued. When he died, all his hiſtorical performances did not exceed ſix pages!

of his houſe, near Bunhill-fields*; we ſee him ſit there in a grey coarſe cloth coat, in the warm ſunny weather, breathing the freſh air. His houſe is, indeed, ſmall, (and what true poet ever poſſeſſed a large one?) It has but one room on a floor. Up one pair of ſtairs, hung in ruſty green, ſits John Milton, in an elbow chair, in black clothes, yet neat enough. Pale, but not cadaverous; his hands gouty.

And what does Milton ſay on his blindneſs, when his enemies reproach him with it as a crime? Theſe are his words, taken from his ſecond defence of the Engliſh nation: 'I prefer my blindneſs to 'yours,' (he addreſſes his adverſaries) 'yours is ſunk 'into your deepeſt ſenſes, blinding your minds, ſo 'that you can ſee nothing that is ſound and ſolid. 'Mine takes from me only the colour and ſurface 'of things, but does not take away from the mind's 'contemplation, what is in thoſe things of true and 'conſtant. Moreover, how many thing are there 'which I would not ſee! How many which I can be 'debarred the ſight without repining! How few 'left which I much deſire to ſee! Vile men! who 'mock us! The blind have a protection from the in-'juries of men, and we are rendered almoſt ſacred. 'To this I impute, that my friends are more ready 'and officious to ſerve me than before, and more 'frequently viſit me. They do not think that 'the only worth of an honeſt man is placed in his 'eyes.'

Richardſon

* Moſt of the following particulars are given in the lively expreſſions of Richardſon.

Richardſon would have conſidered himſelf as fortunate, had he been enabled to add another lively ſcene to the domeſtic life of Milton. This has been obtained by the late laureat, who, in his ſecond edition of his juvenile poems, has given the nuncupative will of our poet. I gather from a maſs of the barren ſuperfluities of legal information, thoſe intereſting ſtrokes with which every man of ſenſibility and taſte will ſympathize. We muſt recollect, that at the period to which they relate, Milton was no more the ſecretary of the commonwealth, and his friends were deſtroyed or diſperſed. Theſe little facts deſcribe more forcibly than the moſt eloquent declamation, thoſe ſecret miſeries which preyed on the heart of Milton, and which muſt not only have diſturbed his ſublime contemplations, but impeded the vigour of his fancy, and the corrections of his criticiſm.

It is here we learn that his children combined to cheat and to rob him; to embitter his hours with ſcorn and diſaffection: and far from ſolacing the age of their venerable, their ſublime parent, they became impatient for his death. He had

> 'No fond companion of his helpleſs years.'
>
> GOLDSMITH.

The name of Milton muſt be added to the melancholy catalogue of the unhappy learned. Behold the great Milton, blind, decrepid, poor, and ſolitary (for ſolitary he muſt then have been amidſt thoſe who ſurrounded him) ſeated by a little fire in his

his kitchen, crying to his wife, with a voice of patient grief, 'Make much of me as long as I live.' ---When his meat is brought to him, becauſe it is made agrecable to his taſte (for he was delicate though temperate) he exclaims with grateful pleaſure to his wife, 'God have mercy, Betty, I ſee 'thou wilt perform according to thy promiſe, in providing me ſuch diſhes as I think fit, whilſt I live.'---Such is our own domeſtic language, and ſuch was the domeſtic language of the ſublimeſt genius. Genius is not above the little conſolations of humanity.

Let me reflect a moment on the ſcene that occupies my imagination. Men of genius! the reflection is addreſſed to you. Milton had perhaps wandered in the fields of fancy, and conſoled his blindneſs with liſtening to the voice of his nation, that was to have reſounded with his name. To Virgil, and Taſſo, and Arioſto, not his maſters but his rivals, their country had not been ungrateful. One had baſked in the ſunſhine of a court; the other had ſeen the laurel wreath prepared for him at Rome; and the laſt lived to hear his name repeated in the ſtreets, and ſaluted as the poet of his nation. Milton had enriched his national poetry with two epics---what were his rewards? Milton conſidered himſelf as fortunate in having one female who did not entirely abandon him; and one obſcure fanatic, who was pleaſed with his poems becauſe they were religious. What laurels! What felicities!

Je lis les noms des poëtes ſameux;
Ou ſont les noms des poëtes heureux? GRESSET.

Anecdotes considered as a Source of literary Amusement superior to Romances.

On aneedotes, judieiouſly arranged, another obſervation is to be made.

Men of letters, to unbend from their ſeverer ſtudies, have frequently had reeourſe to the works of mere imagination. Romanees have been admitted into their libraries; they fly,

———from ſerious Antonine
To Rabelais' ravings, and from proſe to verſe.
ARMSTRONG.

To ſolaee mental fatigue by the amuſements of faney, is no loſs of time. Students know how often the eye is buſied in wandering over the page, while the mind lies in torpid inaetivity; they therefore eompute their time, not by the hours conſumed in ſtudy, but by the real aequiſitions they obtain; they do not number the voyages they make, but the gold and the diamonds they bring home. A man of letters beſt feels the truth of the maxim of Heſiod when applied to Time, that, 'Half is better than the whole.' But it is a complaint of ingenious minds, that when they deviate into the gardens of Armida, they want the fortitude of Rinaldo to exile themſelves from their enchantments. Yet works of amuſement muſt relieve thoſe of learning. If a ſtudent values his hours, it is therefore as dangerous for him to read romanees, as it would be not to read them.

It is perhaps more deſirable to have ſueh literary collections at hand. Aneedotes gratify the eaſe of indolenee by their eoneiſeneſs, and the love of

of novelty by that infinite variety which they preſent to the mind. Perhaps the intereſt they excite is ſuperior to that we feel in a work of imagination. It muſt be felt ſo at leaſt by the enthuſiaſtic votary, who approaches his maſters with anxiety, with curioſity, with admiration.

What painter but muſt receive an exquiſite gratification in this anecdote of Pouſſin? 'I ſaw 'Pouſſin (ſays Marville) during my reſidence at 'Rome. I have frequently admired the exceſſive 'love this excellent painter had for the perfection 'of his art. Old as he then was, I have met him 'among the ruins of ancient Rome, and ſometimes 'in the country, and on the borders of the Tiber, 'ſketching whatever he remarked the moſt to his 'taſte. I have ſeen him frequently return with his 'handkerchief full of ſtones, moſs, flowers, and 'ſimilar objects, which he was deſirous of painting 'exactly after nature. I aſked him one day by 'what means he had attained that high excellence 'which had placed him ſo eminently among the 'Italian painters; he anſwered modeſtly, *I have 'neglected nothing.*'

And what poet is not intereſted in this literary anecdote of a kindred nature, which Johnſon has recorded of Pope? I do not venture to change his expreſſions: 'From his attention to poetry he was 'never diverted. If converſation offered any thing 'that could be improved, he committed it to 'paper. If a thought, or perhaps an expreſſion 'more happy than was common, roſe to his mind, 'he was careful to write it; an independant diſ-

'tieh was preſerved, for an opportunity of inſer-
'tion; and ſome little fragments have been found
'containing lines, or parts of lines, to be wrought
'upon at ſome other time.'

While ſuch anecdotes form a ſouree of literary amuſement, they eonvey at the ſame time ſome of it's moſt valuable inſtructions. We learn from theſe anecdotes of Pouſſin and of Pope, that a painter muſt bring home moſs and flowers, and a poet ſentiments and images. There is nothing ſo minute, that ſhould be neglected; nothing ſo vaſt but which may eſcape; we muſt therefore habituate our mind to ſtudious attention, as much out of our cabinet as in it. The painter does not always require his eaſel to paint, nor the poet his poem to compoſe; their genius aeeompanies them in their walks, and in their eonverſations.

Another reflection offers itſelf to my mind:

The Instructions which an Artist may derive from Anecdotes.

The ſtudies of artiſts have a great uniformity. They have all the ſame diffieulties to encounter, though they do not all meet the ſame glory. It is alſo eertain, that ſeveral men of genius have ſeen their labours neglected for their deficiency in that art of finiſhing, which is the exeellenee of art. An artiſt has many artifices to employ, of which, if he is ignorant, he will never attain that rank whieh he otherwiſe would merit. It is not probable that the zeal of his friends, nor even the malice of his erities, will be capable of diſcovering to

him

him thoſe myſteries of which he is ignorant, or thoſe failings which render his attempts fruitleſs. Such arts of compoſition are alone to be attained by patient meditation on his own, and on the labours of others. It will be impoſſible for him to turn over a ſeries of anecdotes, ſkilfully arranged, and enlightened by reflections, but he will gain ſome valuable intelligence which relates to his own ſtudies. From one, he learns in what manner he corrected and planned; from another, in what manner he overcame thoſe obſtacles, which perhaps at that very moment obſtructed his progreſs, and made him riſe in deſpair from his own unfiniſhed labour. What perhaps he had in vain deſired for half his life, is revealed to him by an anecdote. It is thus that the recreations of indolence may impart the vigour of ſtudy; as we find ſometimes in the fruit we took for pleaſure, the medicine that reſtores our health.

Anecdotes of various Use to Writers.

It is neceſſary that the mind of a writer ſhould be richly ſtored with anecdotes of all kinds. The moſt unconnected anecdote may be advantageouſly employed. Anecdotes will ſerve to enliven his writings by a pleaſing diverſity; to ſtrengthen his opinions by a happy illuſtration; and they will afford him a fund of ingenious alluſions. I have given ſufficient examples of the firſt kinds; I add one of the latter. In No. 172 of the Rambler, the great Moraliſt thus expreſſes himſelf: 'A Virginian king, 'when the Europeans had fixed a lock on his door,

'was so delighted to find his subjects admitted or 'excluded with such facility, that it was from 'morning to evening his whole employment to turn 'the key. We, among whom locks and keys have 'been longer in use, are inclined to laugh at this 'American amusement; yet I doubt whether this 'paper will have a single reader that may not apply 'this story to himself, and recollect some hours of 'his life, in which he has been equally overpowered 'by the transitory charms of trifling novelty.' By this anecdote of the Virginian king, we may perceive in what manner the ingenuity of a writer may employ, for the happiest application, the most trifling and unconnected anecdote.

To return to the subject of anecdotes relating to literary men. There are some who appear born with an antipathy to anecdotes. They exclaim, 'Give me no anecdotes of an author, but give me 'his works.' This contempt is erroneous, and prejudicial to literature.

Anecdotes of an Author serve as Comments on his Works.

One likes to know the history and the occasion of a work; and above all the character of an author. It is certain that these little circumstances serve greatly to lead us into his genius, and the proper understanding of many passages. This is very necessary in political writings, in memoirs, and such as are entitled, 'histories of our own time.' We, of all other nations, abound with party writers; and it is sometimes even necessary not only to know the

character of an *author*, but the very *date* of his *publications*. Every true Briton is doubtleſs a diſintereſted patriot, yet he rarely appears inſenſible to the offer, or the refuſal of a penſion. Our polities are as various as our atmoſphere; and are divided into as many ſects as our religion. The bigotry of toryiſm is ſeen ſometimes to terminate in the atheiſm of whiggiſm. An Engliſhman is for ſaving his ſoul and the nation in the way that he likes beſt.

Anecdotes of hiſtorical Writers very neceſſary for the Reader of their Works.

It is therefore very uſeful to have aneedotes of ſueh writers. When we read Parker's Hiſtory of his own Time, we ceaſe to be ſurpriſed at ſeeing the celebrated Marvell treated as an outcaſt of ſociety; an infamous libeller; and one whoſe talents were as deſpieable as his perſon. We know that this deſeription was dictated not only by the hatred of party, but by that of perſonal raneour. When we read Froiſſart, we muſt not be miſled by his apparent ſimplicity and eaptivating naivete; we muſt remember, that he lived in our country, an adulator of Queen Philippa and the Engliſh eourt. When we read Comines, it will not be improper to recollect this anecdote*. This writer had been born a ſubject, and had been long a favourite of the Duke of Burgundy. Returning from the ehaee, he one day ſat down before his prinee, and joeoſely ordered him to pull off his boots. It is not leſs improper than dangerous, to amuſe one's ſelf with a prince.

The

* It is to be found in Amelot de la Houſſaie's Mémoires Politiques, but I have forgot the volume.

The duke pulled off his boots, and daſhed them in Comines' face, which bled freely. From that time he was mortified at the court of Burgundy by the nick-name of *the booted head.* Comines felt the wound in his mind. He ſoon afterwards went over to the king of France. It was at that court he compoſed his Memoirs, in which his old patron, the Duke of Burgundy, is repreſented as a monſter of pride, of tyranny and cruelty. I am afraid that if we cloſely examine into the anecdotes of the writers of memoirs, we ſhall find that many, like Comines, have had the boot daſhed in their face.

I cannot diſmiſs this topic, without diſcloſing to the public an anecdote which ſhould not have been hitherto concealed from it. When ſome hiſtorians meet with any information in favour of thoſe perſonages whom they have choſen to execrate as it were ſyſtematically, they employ forgeries, interpolations, or, ſtill more effectual villainies. Mrs. Macaulay conſulted MSS. at the Britiſh Muſeum, and in her hiſtorical reſearches, I believe, *deſtroyed the page* of the MS! Theſe dilapidations were at length perceived, and ſhe was watched. The Harleian MS. 7379, will go down to poſterity as an eternal teſtimony of her hiſtorical impartiality. It is a collection of ſtate letters. This MS. has three pages entirely torn out; and it has a note, ſigned by the principal librarian, that on ſuch a day the MS. was delivered to her, and the ſame day the pages were found to be *deſtroyed.**

Addiſon's

* When I gave this anecdote I conſidered it as my duty. It has been the occaſion of bringing on me more enmity and calumny,

Addiſon's Obſervation on Anecdotes illuſtrated.

There is not leſs ſerious truth than exquiſite humour, in the well-known obſervation with which Addiſon opens his Spectators. He ſays, 'I have 'obſerved that a reader ſeldom peruſes a book with 'pleaſure, until he knows whether the writer of it 'be a black or a fair man, of a mild or choleric 'diſpoſition, with other particulars of the like 'nature, that conduce very much to the right un-'derſtanding of an author.'

I confeſs I ſhall read the works of the three great Italian writers, Dante, Petrarch, and Boccacio, with more delight, ſince I have become acquainted with their portraits, elaborately drawn by Tiraboſchi.† From this uſeful writer I am informed that Dante was much given to muſing, and inclined to melancholy; that he had ſomething like pride in his nature; ſilent in ordinary company, but when he ſpoke every word was deeply thought. His converſation was as ſatirical concerning thoſe he did not eſteem, as it was grateful to his friends and patrons.

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calumny, from the partizans of Mrs. Macaulay, than I once imagined I ſhould through all my life have ſuffered. It has been ſifted to the bottom. The late Dr. Morton, who was the writer of the memorandum, when called on, would not give a ſatisfactory anſwer; but an artful evaſion. In the Monthly Review for 1794—the correſpondence on this ſubject has been preſerved.—I do not feel myſelf authorized to expunge the anecdote; and I leave the reader to form his own opinion.

† See his copious Hiſtory of Italian Literature.

patrons. Such was the poet of the ſombrous and ſatiric Inferno!

He who is the model of tender ſonnets, and the poet of the Loves and the Graces, was beautiful in his perſon, enchanting in his converſation, while his eloquence enraptured his delighted auditors. He knew to vary his employments; to fly from the court into the depth of ſolitude *; and it was thus that this amiable genius became as learned as he was accompliſhed.

The licentious writer of the moſt agreeable proſe in Italian literature, had neither the ſublime melancholy of Dante, nor the enchanting politeneſs of Petrarch. In the travels which, in his youthful years, he made in the character of a merchant, he had acquired his variety of knowledge of human nature, and a decided taſte for that freedom of gaiety, which does not always ſpare the bluſhes of the modeſt, and the tremors of the pious. Love, good

* Zimmerman gives another turn to this continual change of place. He ſays, in his Solitude, 'Petrarch poſſeſſed a reſtleſs 'and unquiet mind; diſpleaſed becauſe he was not where he 'could not go; becauſe he could not attain every thing he 'wiſhed; becauſe he looked in vain for ſomething it was 'impoſſible he ſhould find. Petrarch, in ſhort, poſſeſſed all 'thoſe defects which generally accompany men of genius.'

When we conſider that he propoſed to reſide at Venice, and made even a preſent of his library to the republic, yet could not remain there above two years, with other ſimilar reſolutions, which were broken almoſt as ſoon as formed, one muſt prefer this opinion of Zimmerman to Tiraboſchi; ſo difficult is it, however, to fix on the truth!

good eating, and polite literature, were his divinities. He was large and corpulent, an able drinker, an excellent companion, and an adorer of the ladies. The prieſts, at length, frightened poor Boccacio, as they afterwards did his happy diſciple La Fontaine. Boccacio ſuddenly became reſerved, ſolitary, and melancholy; his ſtudies partook of his diſpoſitions, for, after his converſion, (Tiraboſchi ſays) he produced nothing that we can read. One is inclined to lament that he became religious.

It is not amiſs, when we read the miſanthropic works of Hobbes, to recollect, that the philoſopher of Malmeſbury wrote many of them in a manner which, perhaps, has rendered them ſo rugged. We are told, that ſoon after dinner he would retire into his ſtudy, and have his candle, with ten or twelve pipes, placed by him; then ſhutting the door, he began ſmoaking, thinking, and writing. From a man who would ſmoke ten pipes at his ſtudies, it was but natural that his writings ſhould retain ſomething of the effluvia of the tobacco. Such a one might be a philoſophic politician, but not a poetic philanthropiſt.

A Writer of Talents ſees Connexions in Anecdotes not perceived by others.

Yet let it not be conſidered, that, however ſenſible I may appear to the charms of ſtriking anecdotes, I do not perceive that frequently they are frivolous, inſipid, and inconſequential. Many collectors of anecdotes have ſhewn, by their inability, that ſome talents are requiſite, to render them

valuable; ſome taſte in their ſelection, ſome judgment in their arrangement, and ſome elegance in their ſtyle. A man of penetration ſees connexions in anecdotes, which are not immediately perceived by others; in his hands anecdotes (even ſhould they be familiar to us) are ſuſceptible of a thouſand novel turns. We have only to examine the Eloges of the French academicians, compoſed by Fontenelle and D'Alembert, to perceive in what manner literary anecdotes ſhould be preſented, and to moſt of our writers to ſee how they ſhould not be given.

A Model of Anecdotical Compoſition.

As the deſign of this Eſſay is to ſhew in what manner any topic may be enforced, or illuſtrated, by anecdotes, (rather than the manner in which a ſingle anecdote may be given) I prefer to offer, as a model of this ſpecies of anecdotical compoſition, ſome parts of the Critical Reflections on Poetry and Painting, by Du Bos. When this ingenious reflector would eſtabliſh his obſervation, 'that the 'impulſe of genius determines thoſe who were 'born with it, to become a painter or poet,' he ſhews, by a ſeries of connected anecdotes, that moſt of the celebrated artiſts were never born the ſons of painters*. As for poets, they are ſtill a more ſtriking teſtimony of this impulſe of genius. No father ever yet deſigned his ſon to aſſume the profeſſion of a poet. We cannot doubt the truth of theſe obſervations, when we read that variety of anecdotes which he has united with ſuch taſte, and which

* Raphael, obſerves Du Bos, is the only exception.

which eſtabliſh the great principle of the impulſe of genius. There are other ſections in this agreeable work, which inſtruct us by the happy manner in which he has interwoven among his reflections, a ſeries of intereſting anecdotes.

Of Frivolous Anecdotes.

I haſten now to conclude this Eſſay, by noticing, when anecdotes become frivolous and impertinent, given by writers deſtitute of talents.

Dr. Johnſon, who has devoted one of his periodical papers to a defence of anecdotes, expreſſes himſelf thus on certain collectors of anecdotes: 'They are not 'always ſo happy as to ſelect the moſt important. I 'know not well what advantage poſterity can re- 'ceive from the only circumſtance by which Tick- 'ell has diſtinguiſhed *Addiſon* from the reſt of 'mankind, the *irregularity of his pulſe*; nor can I 'think myſelf overpaid for the time ſpent in read- 'ing the life of *Malherbe*, by being enabled to re- 'late, after the learned biographer, that Malherbe 'had two predominant opinions; one, that the 'looſeneſs of a ſingle woman might deſtroy all her 'boaſt of ancient deſcent; the other, that the 'French beggars made uſe, very improperly and 'barbarouſly, of the phraſe *noble gentleman*, be- 'cauſe either word included the ſenſe of both.'

Theſe juſt obſervations may, perhaps, be further illuſtrated by the following notices. Dr. J. Warton has informed the world, that *many of our poets have been handſome*. This, certainly, neither concerns the

world

world nor their poetry. It is trifling to tell us, that Dr. Johnſon was accuſtomed '*to cut his nails to the quick.*' I am not much gratified by being informed, that Menage wore *a greater number of ſtockings* than any other perſon, excepting one, whoſe name I have really forgotten. The biographer of Cujas, a celebrated lawyer, ſays, that *two things* were *remarkable* of this *ſcholar*. The *firſt*, that he ſtudied on the floor, lying proſtrate on a carpet, with his books about him; and, *ſecondly*, that his perſpiration exhaled an agreeable ſmell, which he uſed to inform his friends he had in common with Alexander the Great! This admirable biographer ſhould have told us, whether he frequently turned from his very uneaſy attitude. Somebody informs us, that Guy Patin reſembled Cicero, whoſe ſtatue is preſerved at Rome; on which he enters into a compariſon of Patin with Cicero. He ſhould have recollected, that he might have reſembled the *ſtatue* of Cicero, but not Cicero himſelf. Baillet loads his life of Deſcartes with a thouſand minutiæ, which leſs diſgrace the philoſopher than the biographer. Was it worth informing the public, that Deſcartes was very particular about his wigs; that he had them manufactured at Paris; and that he always kept four? That he wore green taffety in France; but that, in Holland, he quitted taffety for cloth; and that he was fond of omelets of eggs? There are writers who cannot diſtinguiſh between ſuch frivolous particulars, and thoſe anecdotes which convey ſome ſtriking ſentiment, characteriſtic of a ſublime genius.

It

It muſt alſo be confeſſed, that there are readers, who, when they meet with intereſting anecdotes of illuſtrious men, rank them with ſuch frivolous particulars.

Trifling Anecdotes sometimes to be excused.

Yet of anecdotes which appear trifling, ſomething may be alledged in their defence. It is certainly ſafer for *ſome* writers, to give us all they know, than to permit themſelves the power of rejection; becauſe, for this, there is required a certain degree of taſte and diſcernment, which many biographers are not ſo fortunate as to poſſeſs. Let us ſometimes recollect, that the page over which we toil, will probably furniſh materials for authors of happier talents. I would rather have a Birch, or a Hawkins, appear heavy, cold, and prolix, than that any thing material which concerns a Tillotſon or a Johnſon ſhould be loſt. It muſt alſo be confeſſed, that an anecdote, or a circumſtance, which may appear inconſequential to a reader, may bear ſome remote or latent connexion, which a mature reflection often diſcovers. It is certain, that a biographer, who has long contemplated the character he records, ſees many noble connexions which eſcape an ordinary reader. On this ſubject I ſhall quote the judicious obſervation of Dr. Kippis. Our biographer, in cloſing the life of Dr. Birch, has formed an apology for that minute reſearch, which, it is ſaid, this writer has carried to a blamable exceſs. He writes, 'It may be alledged in

'our

'our author's favour, that a man who has a deep 'and extenſive acquaintance with a ſubject, often 'ſees a connexion and importance in ſome ſmaller 'circumſtances, which may not immediately be 'diſcerned by others; and, on that account, may 'have reaſons for inſerting them that will eſcape 'the notice of ſuperficial minds *.'

Character of a Writer of Anecdotes.

I ſhall now cloſe this Diſſertation, by attempting to ſketch the character of a writer of anecdotes.

To collect anecdotes, is the humble labour of induſtry; but not to preſent them with reflection, with acumen, and with taſte.

It

* Abbé d'Olivet has been cenſured for dwelling, in his Continuation of the Hiſtory of the French Academy, on minute circumſtances, unworthy of the dignity of the hiſtorian. Perhaps it was unfortunate for our Abbé, that his predeceſſor Fontenelle ſo eminently diſtinguiſhed himſelf in the ſame career. In a letter which he wrote ſome time after his work was publiſhed, he gives his opinion on theſe minutiæ of literary hiſtory. He ſays, 'For my part, I ſhould 'be charmed if we had a good life of Homer, of Plato, of 'Horace, of Virgil, and their equals. It is in theſe caſes 'the minuteſt details would not fail to intereſt me; but I 'would not give a ſtraw to know the year of Rome in which 'Bavius was born, who were his father, his mother, his 'nurſe, and his preceptor; the number of his brothers and 'ſiſters, nor the year and the day in which he died.' I muſt confeſs, in cloſing this note, that a warm admirer of any great man never finds any thing unintereſting which relates to him; but ſome biographers do not recollect, that the lives they record are not always thoſe which enjoy this privilege.

It is a taſk, not unworthy of genius, to arrange theſe minute notices of human nature, and of human learning. A writer might yet delight us, by a collection of topics which ſhould illuſtrate manners, hiſtory, and literature: his talents muſt be verſatile, yet powerful. A writer of anecdotes has difficulties to encounter, from which the biographer is exempt. A biographer has but the peculiarities of an individual to ſeize; he has only to aſſimilate his genius to that of another perſon. He plays but with one ball, and practice will teach his hand to graſp it with adroitneſs: a writer of anecdotes throws with ſeveral. It becomes neceſſary for ſuch an one to render himſelf familiar with the multiform ſhapes of nature herſelf. Is ſuch a writer to give anecdotes of a Gray, a Milton, or a Sterne? his ſoul muſt be ſoftened with the querulous melancholy of Gray; auſtere with the republican fierceneſs of Milton; and varied with the gaiety and the pathos of Sterne. Anecdotes are but ſqualid ſkeletons, unleſs they are full of the blood and fleſh of reflection. If our writer does not feel with the ſenſibility of taſte, his reflections may be juſt, but trivial; his ſtyle muſt be diverſified by the variety of paſſion; he muſt know to mourn and to rejoice. Does he preſent the anecdotes of war, of perſecution, of ſuperſtition---his periods muſt aſſume a higher tone; his ſentiments muſt overflow his facts; and his heart muſt be more occupied than his memory. Does he give the anecdotes of conviviality, of wit, and of criticiſm---his ſtyle muſt be ſharp with epigrammatic pungency,

gency, or embelliſhed with a thouſand graces*. He is no inferior artiſt who muſt occaſionally alarm with the terrifying ſublimity of an Angelo, or enchant with the ſoftened beauty of an Albano.

A writer of anecdotes ſhould write of eminent characters, as they would themſelves have written of others. He muſt therefore poſſeſs a portion of that genius which he records, if he means to afford us perpetual delight; it is by ſympathy that he will add new gratifications to a refined taſte.

I have already mentioned, as models in the art of anecdotical compoſition, the illuſtrious names of Fontenelle, D'Alembert, and Du Bos. I have been compelled, on this occaſion, to cite the literature of a rival nation. Yet, if our writers of anecdotes could unite the various learning of Dr. Warton, the taſte of Lord Orford, and the faithfulneſs of Boſwell to their exquiſite art of introducing anecdote, we perhaps might have writers who were worthy of being claſſed in the rank of the Fontenelles.

* This art is what has been ſo juſtly admired in Fontenelle's *Eloges* of the Academicians. Every one is treated in a ſtyle conformable to the object in which he excelled. The genius of Fontenelle diſcloſes that of an aſtronomer, a phyſician, a moraliſt, a geometrician, and a poet, as if either of theſe profeſſions had formed the ſtudies of his life.

ON

MISCELLANIES.

I GIVE ſome obſervations on Miſcellanies, which, like their ſubject, may perhaps require an apology for their unconnected ſtate. The Miſcellaniſts ſatiriſe the Pedants; and the Pedants abuſe the Miſcellaniſts; but little has hitherto been gained by this inglorious conteſt; ſince Pedants will always be read by Pedants, and the Miſcellaniſts by the taſteful, the volatile, and the amiable.

Literary eſſays are claſſed under philologieal ſtudies; but philology formerly conſiſted rather of the labours of arid grammarians, and conjectural eritics, than of that more elegant philoſophy whieh has been lately introdueed into literature, and whieh by its graces and inveſtigation, can augment the beauties of original genius, by beauties of its own. This delightful feience has been termed in Germany the ÆSTHETIC, from a Greek term, ſignifying *feeling*. It is ſomething more than the perfect theoretical knowledge of polite literature, and the fine arts, for while it embraces not only their

their common principles, and the particular precepts of every kind of literature, and of every art, it decides on the beautiful by TASTE, and not by *Logic*; by the acuteneſs of the ſenſes it inſtantly FEELS what pleaſes or diſpleaſes. Longinus and Addiſon were æſthetic critics. Ariſtotle and Boſſu, depend on accuracy of judgment, and logical definitions, and *know*, though they may not *feel* what ought to pleaſe. Imagination, ſenſibility, and congeniality of mind are required in an æſthetic critic, who however has often been contemptuouſly appreciated by the critics of the adverſe ſchool. Warburton has called Addiſon an empty ſuperficial writer; nor let it be forgotten how the *logical* critic has been little ſenſible to the character of genius: and that without ſympathy, taſte, and imagination, it is poſſible to form very elaborate criticiſms. But one muſt *feel*, to *decide* in the ſchool of Longinus and Addiſon.

It has been obſerved that philological purſuits inflate the mind with vanity, and have carried ſome men of learning to a curious and ridiculous extravagance. Perhaps this literary orgaſm may ariſe from two cauſes. Philologiſts are apt to form too exalted an opinion of the nature of their ſtudies, while they often make their peculiar taſte, a ſtandard by which they judge of the ſentiments of others. It is not thus with the ſcientific and the moral writer; Science is modeſt and cautious, Morality is humble and exhortative, while Philology alone is arrogant and poſitive. *An experiment* in ſcience is found with infinite labour, and may be overturned

overturned by a new diſcovery; and an *action* in morality may be ſo mingled with human paſſions, that we heſitate to pronounce it perfect, and analyſe it with tranquillity. But it is not difficult with ſome to perſuade themſelves that Virgil is an immaculate author, and that they are men of exquiſite taſte. The Pedants of the laſt age exerciſed a vanity and ferocity revived by thoſe critics, who have been called Warburtonians. They employed ſimilar language in their deciſions to that of Du Moulin, a great lawyer of thoſe days, who always prefixed to his conſultations this defiance, "I who yield to no perſon, and whom no perſon "can teach any thing."

By one of theſe was Montaigne, the venerable father of modern Miſcellanies, called "a bold ignorant fellow." To thinking readers, this critical ſummary will appear myſterious; for Montaigne had imbibed the ſpirit of all the moral writers of antiquity; and although he has made a capricious complaint of a defective memory, we cannot but wiſh the complaint had been more real; for we diſcover in his works nearly as much compilement, as reflection, and he is one of thoſe authors who ſhould quote rarely, but who deſerves to be often quoted. Montaigne was cenſured by Scaliger, as Addiſon was cenſured by Warburton; becauſe both, like Socrates, ſmiled at that mere erudition, which conſiſts of knowing the thoughts of others, and having no thoughts of our own. To weigh ſyllables, and to arrange dates, to adjuſt texts, and to heap annotations, has generally proved the abſence

abſence of the higher faculties. When a more adventurous ſpirit, of this herd, attempted ſome novel diſcovery, often men of taſte beheld, with indignation, the perverſions of their underſtanding; and a Bentley in his Milton, or a Warburton on a Virgil, had either a ſingular imbecillity concealed under the arroganee of the Scholar, or they did not believe what they told the Publie; the one in his extraordinary invention of an interpolating editor, and the other in his more extraordinary explanation of the Eleuſinian myſteries. But what was ſtill worſe, the froth of the head became venom, when it reached the heart.

Montaigne has alſo been eenſured for an apparent vanity, in making himſelf the idol of his lueubrations. If he had not done this, he had not performed the promiſe he makes at the eommeneement of his prefaee. An engaging tenderneſs prevails in theſe *naive* expreſſions which ſhall not be injured by a verſion. "Je l'ay voué à la eommo-
"dité partieuliere de mes Parens et Amis; à ce
"que m'ayans perdu (ee qu'ils ont à faire bientoſt)
"ils y puiſſent retrouver quelques traicts de mes
"humeurs, et que par ce moyen ils nourriſſent
"plus entiere et plus vifue la conoiſſanee qu'ils ont
"eu de moi."

Thoſe authors who appear ſometimes to forget they are writers, and remember they are men, will be our favourites. He who writes from the heart, will write to the heart; every one is enabled to decide on his merits, and they will not be referred to learned heads, or a diſtant day. We

are

are I think little intereſted if an author diſplays ſublimity; but we ſhould be much concerned to know whether he has ſincerity.

Should not this author aſſume a fantaſtic air of novelty, I will ſtill truſt to every ſentiment, I will aſſimilate his ſenſations with my own, and I will look into his works, as into my own heart. Why, ſays Boileau, are my verſes read by all? it is only becauſe they ſpeak truths, and that I am convinced of the truths I write.

Why have ſome of our fine writers intereſted more than others, who have not diſplayed inferior talents? becauſe they have raiſed no artificial emotions, but poured forth the vigorous expreſſions of a heart, which ſeemed relieved from an oppreſſion of ſenſibility, as it's ardent ſentiments animated every period. Montaigne therefore preferred thoſe of the ancients, who appear to write under a conviction of what they ſaid; the eloquent Cicero declaims but coldly on liberty, while in the impetuous Brutus may be perceived a man, who is reſolved to purchaſe it with his life. We know little of Plutarch; yet a ſpirit of honeſty and perſuaſion in his works, expreſſes a philoſophical character, capable of imitating as well as admiring the virtues he records. Why is Addiſon ſtill the firſt of our eſſayiſts? he has ſometimes been excelled in criticiſms more philoſophical, in topics more intereſting, and in diction more coloured. But there is a perſonal charm in the character he has aſſumed, in his periodical Miſcellanies, which is felt with ſuch a gentle force, that we ſcarce advert to it. He has painted forth

forth his little humours, his individual feelings, and eterniſed himſelf to his readers. Johnſon and Hawkeſworth we receive with reſpect, and we diſmiſs with awe; we come from their writings as from public lectures, and from Addiſon's as from private converſations.

Sterne perhaps derives a portion of his celebrity from the ſame influence; he intereſts us in his minuteſt motions, for he tells us all he feels.---- Richardſon was ſenſible of the power with which theſe minute ſtrokes of deſcription enter the heart, and which are ſo many faſtenings to which the imagination clings. He ſays "If I give ſpeeches and "converſations I ought to give them juſtly; for "the humours and characters of perſons cannot be "known, unleſs I repeat *what* they ſay, and their "*manner* of ſaying." I confeſs I am infinitely pleaſed when Sir William Temple acquaints us with the ſize of his orange trees, and with the flavour of his peaches and grapes, confeſſed by Frenchmen to equal thoſe of France; with his having had the honour to naturalize in this country four kinds of grapes, with his liberal diſtribution of them becauſe "he ever thought all things of this kind the com-"moner they are the better." In a word with his paſſionate attachment to his garden, of his deſire to eſcape from great employments, and having paſt five years without going to town, where, by the way, "he had a large houſe always ready to receive him." Dryden has interſperſed many of theſe little particulars in his proſaic compoſitions, and I think, that his character and diſpoſitions, may be more correctly

rectly acquired by uniting theſe ſcattered notices, than by any biographical account which can now be given of this man of genius.

But we muſt now reject this pleaſing egotiſm, that often relates to us all; this vanity, that has often ſo much ſimplicity; this ſelf-flattery, that has often ſo much modeſty. As refinement prevails, we ſeek to conceal ourſelves from too familiar an inſpection; ſimplicity of manners paſſes away with ſimplicity of ſtyle. When we write with ſparkling antitheſis, and ſolemn cadences, with elaborate elegancies and ſtudied graces, an author is little deſirous of painting himſelf in domeſtic negligence. Our writings reſemble our faſhions, various in their manner, but never ſimple, and our authors, like their fellow-citizens, are vying with each other in pomp and dignity. Hence, the perſonal acquaintance of a modern author, is always to his diſadvantage; he has publiſhed himſelf a ſuperior being; we approach and diſcover the impoſture. The readers of Montaigne, had they met with him, would have felt differently; they would have found a friend complaining like themſelves of his infirmities, and ſmiling with them, at the folly of his complaints.

From this agreeable mode of compoſition, a ſpecies of Miſcellanies may be diſcriminated, which, above all others, becomes precious in the collections of a reader of taſte. To the compoſition of theſe little works, which are often diſcovered in a fugitive ſtate, their authors are prompted by the fine impulſes of genius, derived from the peculiarity of their ſituation, or the enthuſiaſm of their prevailing

paſſion. Dictated by the heart, or poliſhed with the fondneſs of delight, theſe productions are impreſſed by the ſeductive eloquence of genius, or attach us by the ſenſibility of taſte. The object thus ſelected, is no taſk, impoſed on the mind of the writer, for the mere ambition of literature; but is generally a voluntary effuſion, warm with all the ſenſations of a pathetic writer. In a word, they are the compoſitions of genius, on a ſubject in which it is moſt deeply intereſted; which it revolves on all it's ſides, which it paints in all it's tints, and which it finiſhes with the ſame ardour it began. Among ſuch works may be placed the exiled Bolingbroke's "Reflections upon Exile," The retired Petrarch and Zimmerman's Eſſays on "Solitude." The impriſoned Boethius's "Conſolations of Philoſophy." The oppreſſed Pierius Valerianus's Catalogue of "Literary Calamities." The deformed Hay's Eſſay on "Deformity." The projecting De Foe's "Eſſays "on Projects." The liberal Shenſtone's Poem on "Economy."

We may reſpect the profound genius of voluminous writers; they are a kind of painters who occupy great room, and fill up, as a ſatiriſt expreſſes it, "an acre of canvaſs." But we muſt prefer thoſe delicate pieces which the Graces lay on the altar of taſte. A groupe of Cupids; a Venus emerging from the waves; a Pſyche or an Aglaia, embelliſh the cabinet of the man of taſte, who connects theſe little pieces by wreaths of roſes. Pliny mentions an artiſt who took great delight in painting

ing ſmall pictures, but was ridiculed at Rome for the confined ſpace he employed; it is not however clear whether the defect aroſe from the futility of his pencil, or the affected gravity of the Romans. A Miſcellaniſt ſhould imitate two painters; the modern Albano, celebrated for painting the ſmalleſt and the moſt beautiful figures; and the ancient Parrhaſius, who was ever in ſuch good humour with himſelf as to ſing at his labours, which happy circumſtance, it is ſuppoſed, imparted ſo much gaiety to his compoſitions.

Theſe little productions are not deſigned to be finiſhed pieces; and in ſome reſpects reſemble the modeſt idea that the ancient painters had of their own works. They marked them by imperfect inſcriptions, and half deſignations; as thus---Appelles was *doing* this picture; Polycletus was *ſculpturing* this image, as if they were but begun, and never could be finiſhed by their hands. They rarely ſaid FECIT, but only FACIEBAT.

But however exquiſitely theſe little pieces may be formed, there is a race of ſtudents who fail not to contemn elegance as frivolity, and inſtructive knowledge as ſuperficial erudition. The ponderous ſcholars have facetiouſly expreſſed their contempt by calling the agreeable writers "empty bottles." Uſbek, the Perſian of Monteſquieu, is one of the profoundeſt philoſophers; his letters are however but conciſe pages. Rochefoucault and La Bruyere are not ſuperficial obſervers of human nature, although they have only written ſentences. Of Tacitus it has been finely remarked by Monteſquieu,

that " he abridged every thing becauſe he ſaw every " thing," and I have ever admired the character of Timanthes, the painter, of whom it is recorded, that he expreſſed more than he painted by an inſtructive and comprehenſive reſervedneſs.

It ſhould, indeed, be the characteriſtic of good Miſcellanies, to be multifarious and conciſe. Montaigne approves of Plutarch and Seneca, becauſe their looſe papers were ſuited to his diſpoſitions, and where knowledge is acquired without a tedious ſtudy. It is, ſays he, no great attempt to take one in hand, and I give over at pleaſure, for they have no ſequel or connection. La Fontaine agreeably applauds ſhort compoſitions :

> Les longs ouvrages me font peur ;
> Loin d'epuiſer une matiere
> On n'en doit prendre que la fleur ;

and old Francis Oſborne has a coarſe and ludierous image in favour of ſuch opuſcula ; he ſays, " Huge volumes, like the oxe roaſted whole at Bartholomew fair, may proclaim plenty of labour and invention, but afford leſs of what is delicate, ſavory, and well concocted, than *ſmaller pieces.*" To quote ſo light a genius as the enchanting La Fontaine, and ſo ſolid a mind as the ſenſible Oſborne, is taking in all the climates of the human mind ; it is touching at the equator, and puſhing on to the pole.

There are writers, as well as readers, who only conſult books for their amuſement ; and they alike are ſenſible, that four things are written and read with greater pleaſure than one, though that one

one ſhould be ſhorter than the four. If literature is only with ſome a mere amuſement, I think it will not diminiſh it's importance in the affairs of human life; and Dryden confeſſes, though he is pleaſed to add to his ſhame, that he never read any thing but for his pleaſure.

Montaigne's works have been called by a Cardinal "the Breviary of Idlers." It is therefore the book of man; for all men are idlers; we have hours which we paſs with lamentation, and which we know are always returning. At thoſe moments miſcellaniſts are conformable to all our humours. We dart along their airy and conciſe page; and their lively anecdote, or their profound obſervation are ſo many interſtitial pleaſures in our liſtleſs hours.

We find, in theſe literary miniatures, qualities incompatible with more voluminous performances. Sometimes a bolder, and ſometimes a firmer touch; for they are allowed but a few ſtrokes; and ſhould not always trace an elegant phraſe, but grave a forcible ſentiment. They are permitted every kind of ornament, for how can the diminutive pleaſe, unleſs it charms by it's finiſhed decorations, it's elaborate nicetics, and it's exquiſite poliſh? A conciſe work preſerves a common ſubject from inſipidity, and an uncommon one from error. An eſſayiſt expreſſes himſelf with a more real enthuſiaſm, than the writer of a volume; for I have obſerved that the moſt fervid genius is apt to cool in a quarto. Race-horſes appear only to diſplay their agile ra-

pidity in the courſe, while on the road they ſoon become ſpiritleſs and tame.

The ancients were great admirers of Miſcellanies; and this with ſome profound ſtudents, who affect to contemn theſe light and beautiful compoſitions, might be a ſolid argument to evince their bad taſte. Aulus Gellius has preſerved a copious liſt of titles of ſuch works. Theſe titles are ſo numerous, and include ſuch gay and pleaſing deſcriptions, that we may infer by their number that they were greatly admired by the public, and by their titles that they prove the great delight their authors experienced in their compoſition. Among the titles are a baſket of flowers; an embroidered mantle; and a variegated meadow. Such a miſcellaniſt as was the admirable Eraſmus, deſerves the happy deſcription which Plutarch with an elegant enthuſiaſm beſtows on Menander: he calls him the delight of philoſophers fatigued with ſtudy; that they have recourſe to his works as to a meadow enamelled with flowers, where the ſenſe is delighted by a purer air; and very elegantly adds, that Menander has a ſalt peculiar to himſelf, drawn from the ſame waters that gave birth to Venus.

The Troubadours, Conteurs, and Jongleurs, practiſed what is yet called in the ſouthern parts of France, *Le guay Saber*, or the gay ſcience. I conſider theſe as the Miſcellaniſts of their day; they had their grave moralities, their tragical hiſtories, and their ſportive tales; their verſe and their proſe. The village was in motion at their approach; the caſtle was opened to the ambulatory poets,

poets, and the feudal hypochondriac liſtened to their ſolemn inſtruction and their airy fancy. I would call miſcellaneous compoſition LE GUAY SABER, and I would have every miſcellaneous writer as ſolemn and as gay, as various and as pleaſing, as theſe lively artiſts of verſatility.

Nature herſelf is moſt delightful in her miſcellaneous ſcenes. When I hold a volume of Miſcellanies, and run over with avidity the titles of it's contents, my mind is enchanted, as if it were placed among the landſcapes of Valais, which Rouſſeau has deſcribed with ſuch pictureſque beauty. I fancy myſelf ſeated in a cottage amid thoſe mountains, thoſe valleys, thoſe rocks, encircled by the enchantments of optical illuſion. I look, and behold at once the united ſeaſons. "All "climates in one place, all ſeaſons in one inſtant." I gaze at once on a hundred rainbows, and trace the romantic figures of the ſhifting clouds. I ſeem to be in a temple dedicated to the ſervice of the Goddeſs VARIETY.

OF PROFESSORS OF ART.

IT has been often ſaid, that a Poet alone ſhould decide on a Poem, and a Painter on a Picture; but this muſt not be accepted as an incontrovertible maxim. It may be obſerved with great truth, that the Profeſſors of an Art, are frequently the moſt incompetent judges of a new performance; and that the truth of criticiſm exiſts no where, but among thoſe Men of Taſte, who, without aſpiring to the dangerous glory of being Artiſts, have devoted themſelves to a liberal and comprehenſive affection for Art.

Many are the prejudices which vitiate the deciſion of an Artiſt. The fever of envy will diſorder the fineſt viſion, and the chillneſs of perſonal diſlike will freeze the faculties into a fatal torpor. There are local, and there are national prejudices; but alluding to none of theſe obvious cauſes, we will conſider an excelling Artiſt, as an honeſt man, and that he comes to the examination of a new production, with that candour which pardons human imperfections, and with that diſpoſition to be pleaſed, without which no man can receive pleaſure; with theſe favourable propenſities, his deciſion may notwithſtanding be unjuſt.

This defect in the criticiſms of Artiſts, has not eſcaped the animadverſion of reflecting minds; but is ſtill ſuſceptible of inveſtigation, and forms an important detection in the critical Art. We encounter

counter in the hiſtory of literature and taſte, perplexities which embarraſs, but which examined will diſappear. Artiſts are often arraigned for envy or vanity, when innocent of the paſſions; and Men of Taſte often vacillate in their own juſt notions, among the oppoſing ſentiments of great Artiſts.

Every ſuperior Artiſt addicts himſelf to ſome peculiar Manner *; long loved, long purſued, and at length obtained, this enamoured object of his paſſion, excludes by it's conſtancy every deviation from the eſtabliſhed excellence; to diſſimilar beauty, he often becomes inſenſible, and he forms his comparative merit, on any performance, from it's alliance, or it's foreignneſs, to his favourite manner. Without recurring to the degrading paſſions, we may thus account for the very oppoſite and erroneous opinions of great Artiſts, on their different labours. It is not probable that Milton envied the genius of Dryden, when he contemptuouſly called him a Rhimer; but it is more evident that Milton's ideas of poetry were not congenial to the manner of Dryden. I ſhall place here ſome inſtances which I have remarked. The witty Cowley deſpiſed the natural Chaucer; the claſſical Boileau the rough ſublimity of Crebillon; the forcible Corneille the tender Racine; the refined Marivaux the familiar Moliere; the artificial Gray the ſimple Shenſtone; and the plain and unadorned Montaigne the rich and eloquent Cicero. Each enſlaved to his peculiar manner, was incapable of

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* Some parts of this paragraph have been inſerted in an Eſſay on the Literary Character, p. 116.

viewing the diverſifications of beauty, but attached himſelf to a partial and endeared portion.

Whenever an uncommon ſpecies of compoſition appears, which diſplays a new mode of excellence, and places a new model in the ſchool of taſte, the ſloweſt and the laſt, to chaunt their peans to that Artiſt, will be Artiſts themſelves. To Envy, this cannot always be attributed, but will be generally derived from a want of the proper taſte for that manner, which taſte can only be gradually formed. One reaſon, perhaps, why Artiſts ſometimes are inimical to a foreign excellence, may be attributed to what the French denominate la jalouſie de metier, the jealouſy of trade; becauſe every novel manner is a kind of hoſtility againſt thoſe already eſtabliſhed. But ſome Artiſts are not always influenced by this prejudice, and yet are equally inimical to the new production.

Of our own times, we may refer to two poets, who, it cannot be denied, have created an original manner, and at their firſt appearance in public, appear to have met a ſimilar fate among Artiſts: When Gray's Odes were publiſhed, they delighted two men of poetical taſte *, while they were ridiculed by two men of poetical genius †. At a ſtill later period, Churchill animadverted with ſeverity on the poetry of Gray; and Goldſmith and Johnſon were as inimical to that manner as Churchill himſelf, though by no means admirers of the genius of Churchill. That manner has now become fixed, and is juſtly appreciated by men of taſte. In neither of

* Warburton and Garrick. † Colman and Lloyd.

of theſe inſtances can the critics be juſtly cenſured; but it may confirm the judicious obſervation of Johnſon, that after all the refinements of criticiſm, the final deciſion muſt be left to common readers unperverted by literary prejudices.

The ſame error frequently induces an Artiſt, when he contraſts his labours with another, to conſider himſelf as the ſuperior, and of courſe to be ſtigmatized with the moſt unreaſonable vanity. I ſhall exemplify the obſervation by the character of Goldſmith; and it may then appear that that pleaſing writer might have contraſted his powers with thoſe of Johnſon, and without any perverſion of intellect, or inflation of vanity, might, according to his own ideas, have conſidered himſelf as not inferior to his more celebrated and learned rival.

Goldſmith might have preferred the felicity of his own genius, which like a native ſtream flowed from a natural ſource, to the elaborate powers of Johnſon, which in ſome reſpect may be compared to thoſe artificial waters which throw their ſparkling currents in the air, to fall into marble baſons. He might have conſidered that he had embelliſhed philoſophy with poetical elegance, and have preferred the paintings of his deſcriptions, to the terſe verſification and the pointed ſentences of Johnſon. He might have been more pleaſed with the faithful repreſentations of Engliſh manners in his Vicar of Wakefield, than with the borrowed grandeur and the exotic fancy of the oriental Raſſelas. He might have believed, what many excellent critics have believed, that in this age comedy requires more

genius than tragedy, and with his audience he might have infinitely more eſteemed his own original humour, than Johnſon's rhetorical declamation. He might have thought, that with inferior literature he diſplayed ſuperior genius, and with leſs profundity, more gaiety. He might have conſidered, that the facility and vivacity of his pleaſing compoſitions were preferable to that Art, that habitual pomp, and that oſtentatious eloquence, which prevail in the operoſe labours of Johnſon. No one might be more ſenſible than himſelf, that he, according to the happy expreſſion of Johnſon (when his rival was in the grave) "tetigit et ornavit." Goldſmith therefore, without any ſingular vanity, might have concluded from his own reaſonings, that he was not an inferior writer to Johnſon; all this not having been conſidered, he has come down to poſterity as the vaineſt and the moſt jealous of writers; he whoſe diſpoſitions were the moſt inoffenſive, whoſe benevolence was the moſt extenſive, and whoſe amiableneſs of heart has been concealed by it's artleſſneſs, and paſſed over in the ſarcaſms and ſneers of a more eloquent rival, and his ſubmiſſive partizans. This character of Goldſmith may explain that ſpecies of critical compariſon, which one great writer makes of his manner with that of a rival.

We can hardly cenſure Artiſts for this attachment to their favourite excellence. Who, but an Artiſt, can value the ceaſeleſs inquietudes of arduous perfection; can trace the remote poſſibilities combined in a cloſe union; the happy arrange-

ment and the novel variation? he not only is affected by the performance like the man of taſte, but is influenced by a peculiar ſenſation, for while he contemplates the apparent beauties, he often traces in his own mind thoſe inviſible corrections, by which the final beauty was accompliſhed; it is the practical hand alone that is verſed in, and the eye of genius alone that can diſcriminate many daring felicities, many concealments of art, and many difficulties overcome. Hence, it is obſerved, that Artiſts do not always prefer thoſe effects which influence an unprejudiced and uncorrupted taſte; but rather thoſe refinements which form the ſecret exultation of Art; and the minuter excellencies which conſiſt in the mechanical (as a critic of taſte terms it) are often preferred to thoſe more elevated ones which ariſe from the ideal. It is this indulgence for the refinements, which at length terminates in corrupting Art.

But a partiality for ſelecting one branch of Art in preference to another, is perhaps the only aſcent to it's ſummit. We muſt not therefore calumniate Artiſts, if they neglect the various ſchools of beauty. It is not difficult for a man of taſte, whoſe hand repoſes, while his head ever thinks; whoſe creative powers are quieſcent, but whoſe perceptive faculties are habitually invigorated; and who in the tranquillity of his cabinet, has only to gaze at pictures, but not to blend colours, and to meditate on poems, but not to compoſe verſes; it is not difficult for this elegant idler to form the moſt various views of beauty in Art; to trace with the

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ſame lively gratification it's diverſities, and to feel no diſpleaſure from the moſt incongruous manners. Such an one, may be ſuppoſed to hover with ecſtaſy round the ideal of a Raphael, and a Pope, or to mix with the groteſque caricatures of a Hogarth or a Butler. This verſatility of taſte is generally denied to the man of genius; and while men of taſte are often unanimous in their opinions, we ſhall frequently obſerve, that the greateſt artiſts give the moſt diſcordant deciſions. Johnſon ſaid that his notions on MSS. proved generally erroneous; and this circumſtance has happened to many eminent writers.

It would therefore ſeem that the moſt unfit perſon to decide on a performance is an artiſt himſelf; and that the genuine merits of a work are candidly adjuſted and correctly appreciated by men of taſte, and rarely by men of genius *.

* An opinion oppoſite to the preſent one, has been maintained by ſeveral artiſts. That opinion appears in the following note by Dr. Burney, in his Letters of Metaſtaſio, vol. II. p. 325.—"It is poſſible for a man of learning, ſtudy, and natural acumen, to be a good critic of the works of others, without genius for producing original works themſelves, ſimilar to thoſe which they are able to cenſure; as was the caſe with Longinus, Bentley, Boſſu, and others; yet ſtill, *cæteris paribus*, the opinion of practical poets and practical artiſts of every kind will have more weight in the ſcale of criticiſm than thoſe of mere theoriſts."

ON STYLE.

THE Hiſtory of Engliſh Style ſince its firſt elegance may, perhaps, be traced in the following conciſe manner.

When the national literature has attained to a certain point, there ariſes a ſimple elegance of Style, which in it's progreſs diſplays richer ornaments, and often becomes refined to a vicious exceſs. It may be traced through four ſchools.

The firſt writers who attempt elegance, and poliſh the aſperities of a language, excel in a natural ſweetneſs and amiable ſimplicity. But the Style is not yet caſtigated, for it ſtill retains many colloquial terms and many negligent expreſſions, which either were not ſuch in their day, or their ear, not being yet accuſtomed to a continued elegance, received no pain from familiar and unſtudied expreſſions. In time theſe defects become ſenſible; yet, as theſe writers are placed among the firſt claſſics of their nation, they are regarded with veneration, and often pointed out as the model for young writers. Among ſuch authors we may place Tillotſon, Swift, and Addiſon.

The ſecond ſchool introduces a more diffuſe and verboſe manner; theſe writers ſolicit the ear by a numerous proſe, and expand their ideas on a glittering ſurface. As elegance can only be obtained by diffuſion, it's concomitant is feebleneſs, and an elegant writer enervates his ſentiments. Beauty is inconſiſtent with Force. Elevated emotions theſe writers

writers rarely awaken, but a graceful manner in compoſition is their peculiar charm. Genius may be ſuppoſed at this period, to be ſomewhat impaired by the exeurſions of their predeceſſors, and they attempt to ſupply by the charms of amenity, and a copious diffuſion of beautiful expreſſion, the demand for novelty, as well as that taſte for elegance of diction, which the public now poſſeſs. Among theſe pleaſing writers may be ranked Sir William Temple, Uſher, Melmoth, &c.

Satiated with the nerveleſs beauty and the protracted period, a third ſchool appears, the votaries of artificial embelliſhment and elaborate diction. At once, magiſterially pompous, and familiarly pointed; conciſe and ſwelling; ſparkling and ſolid; maſſy and light. Sometimes they condenſe ideas, by throwing into one vaſt thought, ſeveral intermediate ones; ſometimes their rotundity of period is ſo arranged that the mind, with the ear, ſeems to riſe on a regular aſcent. The glare of art betrays itſelf; while ſometimes the thoughts are more ſubtile than ſubſtantial, more airy than penetrating; the expreſſions new, and the ideas old. This ſchool abounds with manneriſts; ſuch are Johnſon, Hawkeſworth, Robertſon, and Gibbon.

When this taſte for ornamented proſe prevails, a fourth ſchool ariſes, compoſed of inferior writers. As it is leſs difficult to collect words, than to create ideas, this race becomes verſed in all the myſteries of diction; trivial thoughts are ridiculouſly inveſted by magnificent expreſſions, and they conſider that

that blending the moſt glaring colours, without harmony or deſign, is an evidence of higher art. They colour like the diſtracted painter in Bedlam, who delighted in landſcapes of golden earths, and vermilion ſkies. They tell us that their colours are vivid, and we reply that their figures are chimeras: Theſe fantaſtic novelties flouriſh in the warmth of a faſhionable circle, but once placed in the open air, are killed by the popular gale. Writers of this claſs are not to be mentioned, as they are all dead authors who are yet living.

We may here obſerve that every period of literature has it's peculiar Style, derived from ſome author of reputation; and the hiſtory of a language, as an object of taſte, might be traced through a collection of ample quotations, from the moſt celebrated authors of each period. We ſhould as rarely find an original Style, as an original Genius; and we ſhould be enabled to perceive the almoſt inſenſible variations which at length produce an original Style.

We muſt advert to the opinions of the public, during this progreſs of Style. Thoſe who have long been attached to the firſt ſchool of natural elegance, with all it's imperfections, revolt from the oſtentatious opulence of the third; and are more inclined to favour the ſecond *. The third ſchool is

* Olivet has obſerved, that Cicero complains that he was reproached by his contemporaries for too florid a ſtyle, yet afterwards in Quintilian's time the ſtyle of Cicero is cenſured for aridity and deficiency of ornament. Such is the uſual progreſs

is however the moſt popular, for the public has greater refinement than in the preceding periods.

Some diſtinguiſh between taſte and refinement; this diſtinction is not very obvious. Refinement is only a ſuperior taſte, according to thoſe who are fond of an embelliſhed diction; but it is conſidered as a vicious taſte, by the advocates for ſimplicity of language. They differ in their acceptation of the term, and the former therefore ſmile, when the latter cenſure refinement of diction.

Refinement in Style, is of no remote date. The proſe of Pope is nearly as refined as his verſe; and this taſte he appears to have borrowed from ſome of the French writers, particularly from Fontenelle, whoſe reputation was then very high, and who has carried the *bel eſprit* to it's fineſt exceſs. By the *bel eſprit*, I mean, a manner of writing, which diſplays unexpected turns of thought; the art of half concealing a ſentiment, that the reader may have the pleaſure of gueſſing it; brilliant alluſions, epigrammatic points, and delicate ſtrokes. A mode of writing as dangerous, as it is pleaſing; yet adapted to conciſe compoſitions. No proſaic writer, in Pope's day, approached his refinement; the beſt writers then, and for ſome time after, compoſed with colloquial barbariſms and feeble expreſſions. Steele, Tillotſon, and others,

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progreſs of ſtyle in every literary nation; and if we inſert in this place the name of Addiſon inſtead of Cicero, and Johnſon inſtead of Quintilian, it becomes our own.

others, have written with careleſſneſs and laxity; Addiſon and Dryden delight by an agreeableneſs of manner. When Addiſon deſcribes the powers of beauty, the ſuavity, the grace and the melliſluence give a new idea of our language, and Dryden has a mellow richneſs, an enchanting negligence, and a facility of ideas. They alike threw into their ſtyle a gaiety of fancy, which is equivalent to all the charms of refined expreſſions; and yet are they by no means free from impurities of ſtyle. To Johnſon may be attributed the eſtabliſhment of our preſent refinement; and it is with truth he obſerves of his Rambler, "that he "had laboured to refine our language to grammati- "cal purity, and to clear it from colloquial bar- "bariſms, licentious idioms, and irregular com- "binations, and that he has added to the elegance "of it's conſtruction and to the harmony of it's "cadence *." This refinement in Style, Johnſon appears

* Great inelegance of diction diſgraced our language even ſo late as in 1736, when the enquiry into the Life of Homer was publiſhed. That author was certainly deſirous of all the graces of compoſition, and his volume by it's ſingular ſculptures evinces his inordinate affection for his work. This fanciful writer had a taſte for poliſhed writing; yet he abounds in expreſſions which now would be conſidered as criminal in literary compoſition. Such vulgariſms are common—the Greeks *fell to their old trade* of one tribe's expelling another—the ſcene is always at Athens, and all the *pother* is ſome little jilting ſtory—the haughty Roman *ſnuffed* at the ſuppleneſs. If ſuch diction had not been uſual with good writers at that period, I ſhould not have quoted Blackwall. Middleton,

appears partly to have borrowed from the moſt elegant French writers, whoſe beauties he has ſometimes tranſpoſed and frequently imitated, as Gibbon and Hume have more apparently done. All the refinements of Style exiſt among that refining people, and the Lectures of Blair are often judicious repetitions of what may be found in their critics, or happy examples which are drawn from their writers.

Refinement in Style, with many, includes in the very expreſſion, a cenſurable quality in compoſition. But this criticiſm is unjuſt; refinement may indeed be vicious, as ſimplicity may itſelf be; refinement is not leſs offenſive to a reader of taſte, when it riſes into affectation, than ſimplicity ſinking into inſipidity. But we muſt not confound refinement of Style, with it's puerile exceſs; nor is it juſt to cenſure refinement becauſe it differs from ſimplicity.

Amidſt theſe complications of taſte ſome argue in favour of a natural Style, and reiterate the opinion of many great critics, that proper ideas will be accompanied by proper words. But this obſervation, though ſupported by the firſt authorities, is not perhaps ſufficiently clear. Writers may think juſtly, and write

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Middleton, in his life of Cicero, though a man of claſſical taſte, and an hiſtorian of a claſſical æra, could not preſerve himſelf from the groſſeſt inelegance; the greateſt characters are levelled by the poverty of his ſtyle. Warburton, and his imitator Hurd, and other living critics of that ſchool, are loaded with familiar idioms, which at preſent would debaſe even the ſtyle of converſation.

write offenſively; and a pleaſing Style may convey a vacuity of thought. Does not this evident fact prove that Style and Thinking have not that inſeparable connection which many great writers have pronounced? Milton perhaps imagined that beautiful thoughts produce beautiful expreſſion.—He ſays,

> "Then feed on thoughts that voluntary move
> "Harmonious numbers."——

But are there not beautiful conceptions which may not voluntary move beautiful expreſſions? Writing is juſtly called an Art; and Rouſſeau ſays, it is not an art eaſily acquired. Thinking may be the foundation of Style; but it is not the ſuperſtructure; it is not the ornaments. The art of preſenting our thoughts to another, is often a proceſs of conſiderable time and labour; and the delicate taſk of correction, reſerved only for writers of fine taſte, proves, that there are ſeveral modes of preſenting an idea; vulgar readers are only ſuſceptible of the rough and palpable ſtroke; but there are many ſhades of ſentiment, which to ſeize on and to paint, is the pride and the labour of a fine writer.

In the third ſchool, we obſerve a race of writers who are called MANNERISTS in Style. It muſt be confeſſed that ſuch writers, however great their powers, rather excite the admiration, than the affection of a man of taſte; becauſe their habitual art diſſipates that illuſion of ſincerity, which we love to believe is the impulſe which places the pen in the hand of an author. Two eminent literary Manneriſts are Cicero and Johnſon. We know theſe great men conſidered

conſidered their eloquence as a deceptive art*; of any ſubject it had been indifferent to them which ſide to adopt; and in reading their elaborate works, our ear is more frequently gratified by the ambitious magnificence of their diction, than our heart penetrated by the pathetic enthuſiaſm of their ſentiments. Writers who are not Manneriſts, but who ſeize the appropriate tone of their ſubject, appear to feel a conviction of what they attempt to perſuade their reader. It is obſervable, that it is impoſſible to imitate with uniform felicity the noble ſimplicity of a pathetic writer; while the peculiarities of a Manneriſt, are ſo far from being difficult, that they are diſplayed with nice exactneſs by middling writers, who, although their own natural manner had nothing intereſting, have attracted notice by ſuch imitations. We may apply to ſome monotonous Manneriſts theſe verſes of Boileau:

Voulés vous du public meriter les amours?
Sans ceſſe en ecrivant varier vos diſcours.
On lit peu ces auteurs nés pour nous ennuier,
Qui toujours ſur un ton ſemblent pſalmodier.

Would you the public's envied favours gain?
Ceaſeleſs in writing, variegate the ſtrain;
The heavy author who the fancy calms,
Seems in one tone to chaunt his naſal pſalms.

It may, perhaps, ſurpriſe ſome, that among the literary refinements of the preſent age, may be counted

* The ſophiſtry of Johnſon in converſation appears to have been his favourite amuſement; but Cicero is more cenſurable, ſince in the moſt ſolemn acts of life, and before the tribunal of juſtice, he confeſſes to have protected and ſaved the life

counted above forty different Styles, as appear by a Rhetorical Dictionary. The facility of acquiring a Style produces our numerous authors; and hence we abound with writers, but have few thinkers. A Style deficient in thinking cannot form a perfect compoſition; for we may compare STYLE to the MECHANIC or executive part of painting; while THINKING is the FINE IDEAL or inventive. And this diſtinction, if juſt, will ſettle a queſtion long agitated, whether there is any diſtinction between Style and Thinking. Raphael, who excelled in the ideal, was not ſo perfect in ſome part of the mechanic, as Titian; and we might venture to ſay, that Johnſon, who excelled in the mechanic, did not equal the ideal of Addiſon.

Mr. Webb, an advocate for ſimplicity, has two lines on the Style of Hooker, the laſt of which has great felicity of conception:

" Thy language is chaſte, without aims or pretence;
" 'Tis a ſweetneſs of breath, from a ſoundneſs of ſenſe."

He accompanies them by a note, in which he cenſures refinement, as a ſtudied advantage in the manner, independant on an adequate motive in the thought. Mr. Alliſon would conſider every compoſition as faulty and defective, in which the expreſſion of

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life of many a criminal, by the power of his eloquence. This indeed will be conſidered as no crime at Weſtminſter-Hall, where, without his eloquence, they ſhare his guilt. Plutarch gives one anecdote relative to the orator's exultation. He ſaid to Munatius—" Doſt thou think thou waſt acquitted for " thy own ſake, and not becauſe I threw a veil over thy mani- " feſt crimes, ſo that the court could not perceive thy guilt?"

of the art is more ſtriking than the expreſſion of the ſubject, or in which the beauty of deſign prevails over the beauty of character or expreſſion. I ſhall add the obſervation of a friend, who has often delighted the public, that he would not have the Style withdraw the attention from the Thought.

I mean not to oppoſe the opinions of the warm admirers of ſimplicity. A beautiful ſimplicity itſelf is a ſpecies of refinement; and no writer more ſolicitouſly corrected his works than Hume, who excels in this mode of compoſition. But is it not an evident error in men of taſte to form a predilection for any peculiar Style; ſince all the intermediate ſpecies of diction between ſimplicity and refinement are equally beautiful, when they form the appropriate tone of the ſubject? We often enquire if an author's Style is beautiful or ſublime; we ſhould rather deſire to know whether it is proper. Theſe varieties of diction, which the advocates for ſimplicity conſider as ſo many aberrations from rectitude of thinking, form on the contrary the very exiſtence of juſt thought. Simplicity, however pure, can never cauſe the ſtrong emotions of an ornamented diction; an ornamented diction can never give the rapid and lively graces of gaiety; nor can a rapid Style embelliſh flowery and brilliant conceptions. Every Style is excellent, if it be proper, and that Style is moſt proper which can beſt convey the intentions of the author to his reader.

There appears in every Style, a certain point, beyond which, or which not attained, it is defective. The ſimplicity of the firſt ſchool degenerates into frigidity

frigidity and vapidneſs; the beauty of the ſecond protracts into languor and tedioufneſs; and the grandeur of the third ſwells into turgidity and vacuity. But though this point may be difficult to deſcribe, a fine *tact* long practiſed, inſtantaneouſly diſcovers it. We ſoon decide on the Style of an author, but not on his thoughts; and we often find, that the one may be excellent, while the other has nothing uncommon.

Hume, who has all the refinement of ſimplicity, highly approves of Addiſon's definition of fine writing, who ſays, that it conſiſts of ſentiments which are natural, without being obvious. This is ſurely no definition of fine writing, but of fine thinking. The elegant author has omitted the magical graces of diction; the modulation of harmonious cadences; the art of expreſſing, with delicacy, delicate ideas, and painting ſublime conceptions in the magnificence of language. In my opinion Shenſtone has aſcertained the truth; for fine writing he defines to be generally the effect of ſpontaneous thoughts and a laboured Style. Addiſon was not inſenſible to theſe charms, and he felt the ſeductive art of Cicero when he ſaid, that "there is as much difference in "apprehending a thought clothed in Cicero's lan- "guage, and that of a common author, as in ſeeing "an object by the light of a taper, or by the light "of the ſun." This is not leſs true, than finely expreſſed; and what ſhews Style to be independent of thinking, is, that even common thoughts are found to give pleaſure when adorned by expreſſion.

I muſt therefore diſſent from the admired definition of Addiſon, becauſe it does not define its

 object.

object. In this age of taſte or refinement, if you pleaſe, a compoſition which ſhould alone conſiſt of natural, yet not obvious, ſentiments, would fail to attract, unadorned by the felicities of diction. Simplicity may be too obvious, and refinement too obtruſive; whatever is obvious diſguſts; whatever is obtruſive offends. We may apply to Style in general, the beautiful deſcription which Milton gives of Eve preſenting herſelf to Adam,

"Not OBVIOUS, not OBTRUSIVE ſhe."

It appears that the advocates for ſimplicity of Style, are not ſufficiently ſenſible to the varieties of diction. What, would they think, if we ſhould venture to ſay, that Style may have a marvellous influence over the human mind? Longinus makes a muſical arrangement of words a part of the ſublime, and he adds, that many have acquired the reputation of fine writers, whoſe chief merit conſiſted in the charm of their periods. This obſervation every man of taſte knows to be juſt. We have writers, who, without exhibiting much vigour of conception, or energy of genius, delight by a magical delicacy; ſuch a writer is Melmoth, whoſe Style in the Fitzoſborne's Letters, has peculiar ſuavity and amenity, without either depth of thinking or vigour of expreſſion; and their merits were, therefore, entirely loſt on the athletic powers, and the artificial taſte for Style, of Johnſon, who ſpoke with contempt of thoſe beautiful compoſitions. An eloquent Stye has a pathetic influence on the mind. Men of taſte, who are unbiaſſed by any particular Style,

Style, can alone be ſenſible to its fineſt ſtrokes, and are often in raptures, when others are inſenſible. The practiſed eye in painting ſees pictures the uninitiated can never behold. An ancient artiſt, contemplating the famous Helen of Zeuxis, felt all the enthuſiaſm of extreme ſenſibility; when another wondered at his raptures, he ſaid, "could "you take my eyes, you would be as much de-"lighted."

After all, it is STYLE alone by which poſterity will judge of a great work, for an author can have nothing truly his own but his Style; facts, ſcientific diſcoveries, and every kind of information, may be ſeized by all, but an author's diction cannot be taken from him. Hence very learned writers have been neglected, while their learning has not been loſt to the world, by having been given by finer writers. It is, therefore, the duty of an author, to learn to write as well as to learn to think; and this art can alone be obtained by familiariſing himſelf to thoſe felicitous expreſſions which paint and embelliſh his ſenſations; which give a tone congruous to the ſubject; and which inveſt our thoughts with all the illuſion, the beauty, and motion, of lively perception or pathetic eloquence.

Historical Characters are false Representations *of* Nature.

WE accuſtom ourſelves to pay too liberal an admiration to the great Characters recorded in modern, to ſay nothing of ancient, hiſtory. It ſeems often neceſſary to be reminded, that the moſt intereſting hiſtory is generally the moſt elegantly written, and that whatever is adorned by elegance, is the compoſition of art. Charmed and ſeduced by the variegated tints of imagination, the ſcene is heightened, and the objects move into life; but while we yield ourſelves to the captivating talent of the artiſt, we forget that the whole repreſentation is but a picture, and that painters like poets, are indulged with a certain agreeable licentiouſneſs. Hence we form falſe eſtimates of the human character, and while we exhauſt our ſenſations in artificial ſympathies, amidſt characters and circumſtances almoſt fictitious, for the natural events and the natural calamities of life, we ſuppreſs thoſe warmer emotions we otherwiſe ſhould indulge. The human character appears diminutive when compared with thoſe we meet with in hiſtory; yet, am I perſuaded, that domeſtic ſorrows are not leſs poignant, and many of our aſſociates are characters not inferior to the elaborate delineations which ſo much intereſt in the deceptive page of hiſtory. The hiſtorian is a ſculptor, who, though he diſplays a correct ſemblance of nature, is not leſs ſolicitous of diſplaying the miracles of his art, and therefore enlarges his figures to a coloſſal dimenſion.

dimenſion. Let us alſo reflect, how often a ſhameful partiality dictates to the hiſtorians who poſſeſs the beſt information. Procopius, in his ſecret Anecdotes, pourtrays Juſtinian and Theodora as the vileſt, and in his hiſtory as the moſt virtuous perſonages. Eginhard is a perpetual flatterer of Charles the Great; Euſebius of Conſtantine; Paulus Jovius of Coſmode Medicis; Sandoval of Charles V; and Hume of the Stuarts.

The ancient hiſtorians compiled prodigies, to gratify the credulous curioſity of their readers; but ſince prodigies have ceaſed, while the ſame avidity for the marvellous exiſts, modern hiſtorians have transferred the miraculous to their perſonages. Children read fables as hiſtories, but the philoſopher reads hiſtories as fables. Fabulous narratives may however convey much inſtruction.

It is the pleaſing labour of genius to amplify into vaſtneſs, to colour into beauty, and to arrange the objects which occupy his meditations, with a ſecret artifice of diſpoſition. Voltaire tells us, that no writers, but thoſe who have compoſed tragedies, can throw any intereſt into a hiſtory; that we muſt know to paint and excite the paſſions; and that a hiſtory, like a dramatic piece, muſt have ſituation, intrigue, and cataſtrophe: an obſervation which has great truth, but which ſhews that there can be but little truth in ſuch agreeable narratives. Every hiſtorian communicates his character to his hiſtory; if he is profound and politic, his ſtateſmen reſemble political deities, whoſe leaſt motion is a ſtratagem, and whoſe plot contains the ſeeds of

many plots. If he is a writer, more elegant than profound, he delights in deſcriptive grandeur; in the touching narratives of ſuffering beauty, and perſecuted virtue. If he poſſeſſes a romantic turn, his heroes are ſo many Arthurs, and the actions he records, put a modeſt adventurer into deſpair. No writers more than the hiſtorian, and the profeſſed Romancer, ſo aſſiduouſly practice the artifice of awakening curioſity, and feaſting that appetency of the mind, which turns from ſimple truth, to ſpirited fiction. We ſcarce glance at the glittering of a ſtar, but we gaze with delight on the coruſcations of a meteor. We therefore ſuffer ourſelves to become intereſted with thoſe objects which ſhould intereſt us leaſt.

The hiſtorian feiſing this inclination of the mind, delights it with that imaginary force, and fantaſtic grandeur, of which, while pleaſed with the emotions, we perceive not the extravagance. Popular prejudice aſſiſts the illuſion, and becauſe we are accuſtomed to behold public characters occupy a ſituation in life, that few can experience, we are induced to believe that their capacities are more enlarged, their paſſions more refined, and in a word, that nature has beſtowed on them faculties, denied to obſcurer men. But who, acquainted with human nature, heſitates to acknowledge, that moſt of the characters in hiſtory were perſons whom accident had ſeated upon a throne, or placed with leſs favour around it? Had Alfred been a private perſon, like the Man of Roſs, his various virtues might only accidentally have reached us; and had

Richard

Richard III. been a citizen of London, he had been led unnoticed to the gibbet.

This pernicious prejudice, which peoples the mind with artificial beings, and enfeebles the ſympathies of domeſtic life, will diſappear when we come to thoſe few facts in hiſtory, which the art of the hiſtorian can no longer diſguiſe; and which, refuſing the decorations of his fancy, preſent the ſublime perſonages of hiſtory, in the nudity of truth. Let the monarch loſe his crown, and the miniſter his place; let the caſque fall from the hero, and the cap from the cardinal; it is then, theſe important perſonages ſpeak in the voice of diſtreſs, are actuated by paſſions like our own, and come to us with no other claim on our feelings, than that common ſenſibility, which we owe to humanity. Here, indeed, the leſſons of hiſtory, become inſtructive, becauſe they teach that every other portion of hiſtory has received the romantic gilding of the pencil; that the ſagacity of the ſtateſman is not ſo adroit, as not to be entangled in it's own nets; that the ardour of the hero is often temerity which eſcaped, and ſometimes temerity chaſtiſed; and that in general great characters, owe much more to Fortune, than to Nature; that ſingular coincidencies have formed ſingular events; but, that whenever the deluſion of the hiſtorian ceaſes, theſe illuſtrious perſons appear to have been actuated by paſſions ſimilar to our own, and that their talents are not ſuperior to thoſe whoſe obſcure actions languiſh in a confined ſphere. It is obſerved, by Monteſquieu, that "moſt legiſlators

" have been men of limited capacities, whom " chance placed at the head of others, and who " have generally conſulted merely their prejudices " and their fancies."

It is, indeed, uſeful to pauſe over thoſe paſſages which give the very feelings of the illuſtrious perſons to whom they relate, and if to ſome, theſe may ſeem to humble the great, they will alſo elevate us; or, rather, they will reinſtate human nature in that juſt equality in which we are all placed. The phantom of hiſtory will vaniſh, but the human form will remain palpable and true.

Few circumſtances are more curious in hiſtory than the unadorned recitals of ſome memoirs. Thomas Heywood, in his " England's Elizabeth," has noticed an inſtance that one of the moſt celebrated characters felt the ſame agitation, and expreſſed the ſame language, which an inferior priſoner would have experienced. This writer gives her meditations in the garden during her impriſonment, in which the natural paſſions are not entirely loſt in the diſtortion of the language. During her confinement at Woodſtock, hourly dreading aſſaſſination, ſhe uſed to ſit at the grate of her priſon window, morning and evening, liſtening and ſhedding tears at the light carolling of the paſſing milkmaids. Among other inſults ſhe received in travelling, the high winds having diſcompoſed her dreſs, ſhe deſired to retire to ſome houſe to adjuſt herſelf; but this ſhe was refuſed, and was compelled to make her toilette under a hedge! A kindred anecdote is mentioned by Sir Walter

Walter Rawlegh, of Charles V. who juſt after his reſignation, having a private interview with ſome ambaſſador, and having prolonged it to a late hour after midnight, called for a ſervant to light the ambaſſador on the ſtairs; but they had all retired to reſt; and the emperor, yet the terror of Europe, was compelled to ſnatch a candle and conduct the ambaſſador to the door. It is thus that majeſty, unrobed of factitious powers, convinces even the ſlow apprehenſion of the vulgar, that the breaſt of grandeur only conceals paſſions like their own; and that Elizabeth dreſſing under a hedge, and Charles lighting the ambaſſador on the ſtairs, felt the ſame bitter indignity, which they are doomed to feel much oftener.

If it were poſſible to read the hiſtories of thoſe who are doomed to have no hiſtorian, and to glance into domeſtic journals, as well as into national archives, we ſhould then perceive the unjuſt prodigality of our ſympathy to thoſe few names, which eloquence has adorned with all the ſeduction of her graces. We ſhould then acknowledge, that ſuperior talents are not ſufficient to obtain ſuperiority, and that the full tide of opportunity, which often carries away the unworthy in triumph, leaves the worthy among the ſhoals. It is a curious ſpeculation for obſerving men, to trace great characters in little ſituations, and to detect real genius paſſing through life incognito. How many mothers of great characters, may addreſs their ſons in the words of the Mother of Braſidas; he was indeed a great and virtuous

 commander,

commander, but ſhe obſerved *that Sparta had many greater Braſidas's.* Some obſcure men, whom the world will never notice, had they occupied the ſituation of great perſonages, would have been perhaps even more illuſtrious. There are never wanting among a poliſhed people, men of ſuperior talents or ſuperior virtues; every great revolution evinces this truth; indeed, at that perilous moment, they ſhew themſelves in too great numbers, and become fatal to each other, by their rival abilities.

Robertſon, who is ſo pleaſing an hiſtorian, and therefore, whoſe veracity becomes very ſuſpicious, confeſſes, however, that "in judging of the con-"duct of princes, we are apt to aſcribe too much "to political motives, and too little to the paſſions "which they feel in common with the reſt of man-"kind. In order to account for Elizabeth's pre-"ſent, as well as her ſubſequent conduct towards "Mary, we muſt not always conſider her as a "queen, we muſt ſometimes regard her merely as "a woman." This is preciſely what the refining ingenuity of this writer does as rarely as any hiſtorian; and Robertſon appears to have been more adapted for a miniſter of ſtate, than the principal of a Scotch college. He explains projects that were unknown, and details ſtratagems which never took place. We often admire the fertile conceptions of the queen regent; of Elizabeth; and of Bothwell; when in truth, we are defrauding Robertſon of whatever praiſe may be due to political invention.

But we, who, however charmed with hiſtoric beauty, revere truth and humanity, muſt learn to reduce the aggravated magnitude of the illuſtrious dead, that we may perform an act of juſtice to the obſcure living. The ſympathy we give to a princeſs, raviſhed from her throne and dragged by traitors, to wet with tears, the iron grates of her dungeon, we may with no leſs propriety beſtow on that unfortunate female, whom unfeeling creditors have ſnatched from maternal duties, or ſocial labours, to periſh by the hour, in ſome loathſome priſon. If we feel for the decapitation of a virtuous and long perſecuted ſtateſman, we are not to feel leſs for that more common object, a man of genius, condemned to languiſh in obſcurity, and periſh in deſpair. A great general dies in the embrace of victory, and his character reaches poſterity in immortal language; but he probably conducted hundreds whom nature intended for generals, but whom fortune made foot ſoldiers: what heroes may be found in hoſpitals! Katharine, the queen of Henry VIII. is an object of our tendereſt ſympathy, but why ſhould our ſenſibility be diminiſhed, when we look on thoſe numerous females, not leſs gentle, nor leſs cruelly miſuſed, who, without the conſolations of ſovereignty, are united to deſpots, not leſs arbitrary and brutal than Henry? The ſorrows of the Scottiſh Mary, the refined inſults of a rival ſiſter, the grin of ſcorn, and the implication of infamy, may penetrate our hearts; but we forget that there are families, where ſcenes not leſs terrible, and ſiſters not leſs unrelenting,

are hourly diſcovered; and that there are beauties, who without being confined to the melancholy magnificence of a caſtle, or led to the diſmal honour of an axe, equally fall victims, or to fatal indiſcretion, or to fatal perſecution.

The faſcination which thus takes poſſeſſion of us in hiſtorical narratives, is therefore the artifice of the hiſtorian, aſſiſted by thoſe early prejudices of that ſuperiority which we attach to great characters. He who poſſeſſes the talent of fine writing, is indeed in poſſeſſion of a deceptive art; and I have often been tempted to think, that men of genius, who have ever appeared, by the energy of their complaints, to be endowed with a peculiar ſenſibility of ſorrow, and who excel in the deſcription of the paſſions, do not always feel more poignantly than others, who without the power of expreſſing their ſenſations, expanding their ſentiments, and perpetuating their anguiſh, are doomed to ſilent ſorrow; to be crazed in love without venting effuſions in verſe, and to periſh in deſpair without leaving one memorial of their exquiſite torture.

But I will not cloſe this eſſay without obſerving, that it is not to every illuſtrious character, recorded in hiſtory, that we can pay too prodigal a tribute of admiration. There are men, who throw a new luſtre on humanity, and hold a torch of inſtruction which brightens through the clouds of time. It has been boldly ſaid, by old Montaigne, that man differs more from man, than man from beaſt. But ſpeculations on human nature muſt not be formed

formed on ſuch rare inſtances. Beſides, even of characters like theſe, their equals may be found among obſcure individuals, and ſome of the nobleſt actions have been performed by unknown perſons; as that Miner, who in ſome Italian war, animated by patriotic fervour, to direct the exploſion, ruſhed into the mine he had formed. This action is the ſummit of heroiſm.

Familiar objects of diſtreſs, and familiar characters of merit, want only to form a ſpectacle as intereſting, as the pompous inflation of hiſtory can diſplay, thoſe powers of ſeducing eloquence, which diſguiſe the ſimplicity of truth, with the romantic grandeur of fiction. Nations have abounded with heroes and ſages; but becauſe they wanted hiſtorians, they are ſcarce known to us by name; and individuals have been heroes and ſages in domeſtic life, whoſe talents and whoſe virtues are embelliſhed in no hiſtorical record, but traced, in tranſient characters, on the feeble gratitude of the human heart.

On Prefaces.

I DECLARE myſelf infinitely delighted by a Preface. Is it exquiſitely written? no literary morſel is more delicious. Is the author inveterately dull? it is a kind of preparatory information, which may be very uſeful. It argues a deficiency in taſte to turn over an elaborate Preface unread; for it is the odour of the author's roſes; every drop diſtilled at an immenſe coſt. It is the reaſon of the reaſoning, and the folly of the fooliſh. I agree with the Italians, who call theſe little pieces *La ſalſa del Libro;* the ſauce of the book.

I do not wiſh, however, to conceal, that ſeveral writers, as well as readers, have ſpoken very diſreſpectfully of this ſpecies of literature. That fine writer, Monteſquieu, in cloſing the Preface to his Perſian Letters, ſays, "I do not praiſe my Perſians; "becauſe it would be a very tedious thing, put "in a place already very tedious of itſelf; I mean "a Preface." Spence, in the Preface to his Polymetis, informs us, that "there is not any ſort of "writing which he ſits down to, with ſo much un-"willingneſs, as that of Prefaces; and as he believes "moſt people are not much fonder of reading them, "than he is of writing them, he ſhall get over this as "faſt as he can." Peliſſon warmly proteſted againſt prefatory compoſition; but when he publiſhed the works of Sarraſin, was wiſe enough to compoſe a very pleaſing one. He indeed endeavoured to juſtify himſelf for acting againſt his own opinions, by this ingenious

ingenious excuſe, that like funeral honours, it is proper to ſhew the utmoſt regard for them when given to others, but to be inattentive to them for ourſelves.

Notwithſtanding all this evidence, I have ſome good reaſons for admiring Prefaces; and barren as the inveſtigation may appear, ſome literary amuſement can be gathered.

In the firſt place I obſerve, that a Prefacer is generally a moſt accompliſhed liar. Is an author to be introduced to the public? the Preface is as genuine a panegyric, and nearly as long an one, as that of Pliny's on the Emperor Trajan. Such a Preface is ringing an alarum bell for an author. If we look cloſer into the characters of theſe maſters of ceremony, who thus ſport with and defy the judgment of their reader, and who, by their extravagant panegyric, do conderable injury to the cauſe of taſte, we diſcover that ſome accidental occurrence has occaſioned this vehement affection for the author, and which, like that of another kind of love, makes one commit ſo many extravagancies.

Prefaces are indeed rarely ſincere. It is juſtly obſerved by Shenſtone in his prefatory Eſſay to the Elegies, that, "diſcourſes prefixed to poetry, inculcate ſuch tenets as may exhibit the performance "to the greateſt advantage. The fabric is firſt "raiſed, and the meaſures by which we are to judge "of it, are afterwards adjuſted." This obſervation might be exemplified by more inſtances than ſome readers might chuſe to read. It will be ſufficient to obſerve, with what art, both Pope and Fontenelle, have

have drawn up their Eſſays on the nature of Paſtoral Poetry, that the rules they wiſhed to eſtabliſh might be adapted to their own paſtorals. Has accident made ſome ingenious ſtudent apply himſelf to a ſubordinate branch of literature, or to ſome ſcience which is not highly eſteemed?---look in the Preface for its ſublime panegyric. Collectors of coins, dreſſes, and butterflies, have aſtoniſhed the world with eulogiums which would raiſe their particular ſtudies into the firſt ranks of philoſophy.

It would appear that there is no lie, to which a Prefacer is not tempted. I paſs over the commodious Prefaces of Dryden, which were ever adapted to the poem, and not to poetry, to the author, and not to literature. The boldeſt Prefaee-liar was Aldus Manutius, who having printed an edition of Ariſtophanes, firſt publiſhed in the Preface, that Saint Chryſoſtom was accuſtomed to place this comic poet under his pillow, that he might always have his works at hand. As in that age, a ſaint was ſuppoſed to poſſeſs every human talent, good taſte not excepted, Ariſtophanes thus recommended became a general favourite. The anecdote laſted for near two centuries; and what was of greater conſequence to Aldus, quickened the ſale of his Ariſtophanes. This ingenious invention of the Prefaeer of Ariſtophanes, at length was detected by Menage.

The inſincerity of Prefaces ariſes whenever an author would diſguiſe his ſolicitude for his work, by appearing negligent and even undeſirous of its ſucceſs. A writer will rarely conclude ſuch a Preface without betraying himſelf. I think, that even Dr. Johnſon,

Johnſon, forgot his ſound dialectic in the admirable Preface to his Dictionary. In one part he ſays, having laboured this work with ſo much application, "I cannot but have ſome degree of parental fondneſs." But in his concluſion, he tells us, "I diſmiſs it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from cenſure or from praiſe." I deny the Doctor's "frigidity" This poliſhed period exhibits an affected ſtoiciſm, which no writer ever felt for the anxious labour of a great portion of life, addreſſed not merely to a claſs of readers, but to literary Europe.

But if Prefaces are rarely ſincere, or juſt, they are notwithſtanding literary opuſcula, in which the author is materially concerned. A work with a poor Preface, like a perſon who comes with an indifferent recommendation, muſt diſplay uncommon merit to maſter our prejudices, and to pleaſe us, as it were, in ſpite of ourſelves. Works ornamented by a finiſhed Preface, ſuch as Johnſon not infrequently preſented to his friends or his bookſellers, inſpire us with awe; we obſerve a veteran guard placed in the porch, and we are induced to conclude from this appearance, that ſome perſon of eminence reſides in the place itſelf.

In Prefaces an affected haughtineſs and an affected humility are alike deſpicable. The firſt is called by the French, *La morgue litteraire,*" the furly pompoſity of literature. This has been frequently practiſed by writers, who have ſucceeded in one or two works, while the failure of their other productions appears to have given them a literary hypochondriaſm.

poehondriaſm. Such a Prefaeer, firſt informs us, that he is above the reaeh of cenſure: and cenſure therefore redoubles its vigilance. Secondly, that he has already received the approbation of the diſcerning; that is to ſay, five or ſix gentleman, whom he admits to his manuſcript recitatives. And thirdly, that he cares very little for the mob; which is a kind expreſſion for thoſe who exchange ſterling money for counterfeit genius. To ſuch we may anſwer, that no writer can ever be placed above cenſure; that after all his ſelf-eulogies and ſelf-conſolations, his readers, and not the five or ſix gentlemen, can alone give him a ſolid reputation. I ſhall notice as a model of this "*morgue* "*litteraire*" Dr. Armſtrong. His "Art of preſerving Health" is one of the moſt terſe, and claſſical compoſitions in the language; but moſt of his other verſe, evinces nothing but barren labour. In his lively "Sketches," he acquaints us in the Preface, that "he eould give them mueh bolder ſtrokes, as "well as more delieate touches, but that he dreads "the danger of writing too well, and feels the va-"lue of his own labour too ſenſibly, to beſtow it upon "the mobility." This is pure milk compared to the gall, in the Prefaee to his Poems. There he very modeſtly tells us, that "he has at laſt taken the "trouble to collect them. What he has deſtroyed, "would, probably enough, have been better received "by the great majority of readers. But he has "always moſt heartily deſpiſed their opinion." The truth is, he is only ſhewing an undue reſentment for ſome unfortunate productions. St. Jerome entitled

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the Preface to his verſion of the Scriptures, *Prologi galeati*, Prefaces that wear a caſque. Theſe *armed* Prefaces were long neceſſary in times of literary controverſy: an author then either replied to, or anticipated a reply to the attacks of his opponent.

The public are treated with another kind of contempt, when an author, inſtead of "deſtroying" like Dr. Armſtrong; profeſſes to publiſh his puerilities. This Warburton did, in his pompous edition of Shakeſpeare. In the preface he informed the public, that his notes "were among his "*younger amuſements*, when he turned over theſe "*ſort of writers*." This ungracious compliment to Shakeſpeare and the public, merited that perfect ſcourging which our haughty commentator received from the ſarcaſtic canons of criticiſm. Scudery was a writer of ſome genius, and great variety. His Prefaces are remarkable for their gaſconades. In his Epic Poem of Alaric, he ſays, "I have ſuch a facility in writing verſes, and alſo "in my invention, that a poem of double it's "length would have coſt me little trouble. Al- "though it contains only eleven thouſand lines, I "believe that longer epics do not exhibit more "embelliſhments than mine." And to conclude with one more ſtudent of this claſs, Amelot de la Houſſaie, in the Preface to his tranſlation of the Prince of Machiavel, inſtructs us, that "he con- "ſiders his copy as ſuperior to the original, be- "cauſe it is every where intelligible, and Machi- "avel is frequently obſcure." I have ſeen in the

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play bills of ſtrollers, a very pompous deſcription of the triumphant entry of Alexander into Babylon; had they ſaid nothing about the triumph, it might have paſſed without exciting ridicule; and one might not ſo malicioufly have perceived how ill the four candle-ſnuffers crawled as elephants, and the triumphal car diſcovered it's want of a lid. But having pre-excited attention, we had full leiſure to ſharpen our eye. To theſe imprudent authors, and actors, we may apply a Spaniſh proverb, which has the peculiar quaintneſs of that people; *Aviendo pregonado vino, venden vinagre*; having cried up their wine, they ſell us vinegar.

A ridiculous humility in a preface, is not leſs deſpicable. Many idle apologies were formerly in vogue for publication, and formed a literary cant, of which, now the meaneſt writers perceive the futility. A literary anecdote of the Romans has been preſerved, which is ſufficiently curious. One Albinus, in the Preface to his Roman Hiſtory, intercedes for pardon for his numerous blunders of phraſeology; obſerving that they were the more excuſeable, as he had compoſed his hiſtory in the Greek language, with which he was not ſo familiar as his maternal tongue. Cato ſeverely rallies him on this; and juſtly obſerves, that our Albinus had merited the pardon he ſolicits, if a decree of the ſenate had compelled him thus to have compoſed it, and provided he could not have obtained a diſpenſation. The confeſſion of the ignorance of the language we employ, is like that excuſe which ſome writers form for compoſing on topics,

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of which they acknowledge their inability. A reader's heart is not ſo eaſily mollified; and it is a melancholy truth for literary men, that the pleaſure of abuſing an author is generally ſuperior to that of admiring him. One appears to diſplay more critical acumen than the other, by ſhewing, that though we do not chuſe to take the trouble of writing, we have infinitely more genius than the author. Theſe ſuppliant Prefacers are deſcribed by Boileau.

Un auteur a genoux dans une humble Preface
Au lecteur qu'il ennuie a beau demander grace;
Il ne gagnera rien ſur ce juge irrité,
Qui lui fait ſon procès de pleine autorité.

Low in a humble Preface authors kneel;
In vain, the wearied reader's heart is ſteel.
Callous, that irritated judge with awe,
Inflicts the penalties and arms the Law.

The moſt entertaining Prefaces in our language, are thoſe of Dryden; and though it is ill-naturedly ſaid, by Swift, that they were merely formed,

" To raiſe the volume's price a ſhilling,"

yet theſe were the earlieſt commencements of Engliſh criticiſm, and the firſt attempt to reſtrain the capriciouſneſs of readers, and to form a national taſte. Dryden has had the candour to acquaint us with his ſecret of prefatory compoſition; for in that one to his Tales, he ſays, " the nature " of preface-writing is rambling; never wholly " out,

"out of the way, nor in it. This I have learnt "from the practice of honeſt Montaigne." There is no great riſk in eſtabliſhing this obſervation as an axiom in literature; for ſhould a Prefacer loiter, it is never difficult to get rid of lame perſons, by eſcaping from them; and the reader may make a Preface as conciſe as he chuſes.

It is poſſible for an author to paint himſelf in amiable colours, in this uſeful page, without incurring the contempt of egotiſm. After a writer has rendered himſelf conſpicuous by his induſtry or his genius, his admirers are not diſpleaſed to hear ſomething relative to him, from himſelf. Mr. Hayley, in the Preface to his Poems, has conveyed an amiable feature in his perſonal character, by giving the cauſe of his devotion to literature, as the only mode by which he could render himſelf of ſome utility to his country. The animation of the whole paſſage is a teſtimony of the zeal of it's writer; and who, recollecting the perſeverance of his ſtudies, the juſtneſs of his taſte, and the elegance of his verſe, can refuſe the wreath of poetical honour? There is a modeſty in the Prefaces of Pope, even when this great poet collected his immortal works; and in ſeveral other writers of the moſt elevated genius, in a Hume and a Robertſon, which becomes their happy ſucceſſors to imitate, and inferior writers to contemplate with awe.

I conclude by obſerving, that there is in Prefaces a due reſpect to be ſhewn to the public, and to ourſelves. He that has no ſenſe of ſelf-dignity, will

will not inſpire any reverence in others; and the ebriety of vanity will be ſobered by the alacrity we all feel in diſturbing the dreams of ſelf-love. If we dare not attempt the rambling Prefaces of a Dryden, we may ſtill entertain the reader, and ſooth him into good humour, for our own intereſt. This, perhaps, will be beſt obtained, by making the Preface (like a ſymphony to an opera) to contain ſomething analogous to the work itſelf. The mind thus attuned into a proper harmony of tone, will reſpond to the emotions we are preparing to excite, and feel the want of our work, as a deſire not elſewhere to be gratified.

Some Observations on Diaries, Self-biography, and Self-characters.

THE ſtudy of Biography is a reeent taſte in Britain. The art of writing lives has been but lately known; and it was, therefore, an uſual complaint with the meagre Biographers of the laſt century, when their ſubject was a man of letters, that his life could not be deemed very intereſting, ſince he, who had only been illuſtrious in his cloſet, could not be ſuppoſed to afford any materials for the hiſtorian. The life of a prime miniſter, or the memoirs of a general, as they contained the detail of political intrigues and political oppoſition; battles or ſtratagems; were conſidered to afford happier opportunities for a writer to diſplay the ability of his literary powers, the ſubtilty of his diſcernment, and the colouring of his deſcriptions.

But as the human mind became the great object of our inquiry, and to detect and ſeparate the ſhades of the paſſions the great aim of the Biographer; reflecting men perceived, that the philoſopher, like other men, had his diſtinct characteriſtics. And it has now become the labour of criticiſm, to compoſe the life of an author; no writer can now ſucceſsfully accompliſh his Biographic attempts, unleſs he poſſeſſes a flexibility of taſte, which, like the cameleon, takes the colour of that object on which it reſts.

Every man, in whatever department he moves, has paſſions, which will vary even from thoſe who

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are acting the ſame part as himſelf. Our ſouls, like our faces, bear the general reſemblance of the ſpecies, but retain the particular form which is peculiar to the individual. He who ſtudies his own mind, and has the induſtry to note down the fluctuations of his opinions, the fallacies of his paſſions, and the vacillations of his reſolutions, will form a journal to himſelf peculiarly intereſting, and, probably, not undeſerving the meditations of others. Nothing which preſents a faithful relation of humanity, is inconſiderable to a human being.

There once prevailed the cuſtom of a man's journaliſing his own life. Many of theſe journals yet remain in their MS. ſtate, and ſome, unfortunately for journal-writing, have been publiſhed. We are not, however, to decide on the nature of a work by the ineptitude of it's performance. The writers of theſe Diaries were not philoſophers, for the age was not philoſophic. Too often they were alchemiſts, and ſometimes conſidered themſelves as magicians. Some only regiſtered the minuteſt events of domeſtic life. Dates of birth, and ſettlements of marriage, may be pardoned to the individual; but to give the importance of hiſtory to the progreſs of a purge, and to return divine thanks for the cutting of a corn, (and the edited journal of Elias Aſhmole contains few other facts,) is giving importance to objects which can only be obſervable in the hiſtory of any other animal but Man. I am acquainted with a worthy gentleman, who, for this half century, is perform-

ing the ſame labours. He can tell where he dined fifty years paſt, and accompany the information with no conciſe critique. When he takes one of theſe little volumes down, he applies to himſelf the obſervation of Martial, and ſays, he has learnt the art of living life twice over. The pleaſures of memory are delicious; it's objects muſt, however, be proportionate to the powers of viſion, and a meagre or a ſmart dinner, is an object ſufficiently delightful, or terrible, to give play to the recordatory organs of this Diariſt. I have remarked, however, one thing from his contemptible narrative. He reſolved to diſtinguiſh the happy circumſtances of his life in red ink. In looking over his Diaries, notwithſtanding the obſcurity of his ſituation, and the humility of his deſires, I cannot find that his pen was often dipt in the crimſon ink of felicity.

An obſervation may be made on the diurnal page. He who can, without reſerve or heſitation, form ſuch a journal, may be ſafely pronounced an honeſt man. Could a Clive, or a Cromwell, have compoſed a Diary? Neither of theſe men could ſuffer ſolitude and darkneſs; at the ſcattered thoughts of caſual reflection they ſtarted; what would they have done, had memory marſhaled their crimes, and arranged them in the terrors of chronology? Theſe Diaries form that other Self, which Shafteſbury has deſcribed every thinking being to poſſeſs; and which, to converſe with, he juſtly accounts the higheſt wiſdom. When Cato wiſhes that the breaſt of every man were diapha-

nous, it is only a metaphorieal expreſſion for ſuch a Diary.

There are two ſpecies of minor Biography which may be diſeriminated; detailing our own life, and pourtraying our own character. The writing our own life has been practiſed with various ſucceſs; it is a delicate operation; a ſtroke too mueh may deſtroy the effect of the whole. If once we detect an author deeeiving or deceived, it is a livid ſpot which infects the entire body. To publiſh one's own life has ſometimes been a poor artifice to bring obſcurity into notice; it is the ebriety of vanity, and the delirium of egotiſm. When a great man leaves ſome memorial of his days, his death-bed ſanctions the truth, and the grave conſecrates the motive. There are certain things which relate to ourſelves, which no one ean kuow ſo well; a great genius obliges poſterity when he records them. But they muſt be compoſed with calmneſs, with ſimplicity, and with ſincerity; the Biographic Sketch of Hume, written by himſelf, is a model of attic ſimplicity. The life of Lord Herbert is a biographical curioſity. The Memoirs of Sheffield Duke of Buckingham is very intereſting; and thoſe of Colley Cibber is a fine picture of the ſelf-painter. We have ſome other pieces of ſelf-biography, preeious to the philoſopher.

Biography ſhould not be written with eloquence; with Rouſſeau, perhaps, eloquence was only a natural harmony from the voice of truth; but it may alſo be the artificial tones of deeeit.

What in Rouſſeau was nature, may in others be artifice. Self-biographers, like Hume, who ſtate facts with an attic ſimplicity, appear to ſpeak unreſervedly to the reader, and as if they propoſed only to ſupply facts, for others to explain and embelliſh.

There is another ſpecies of minor Biography, which, I am willing to believe, could only have been invented by the moſt refined and the vaineſt nation. A literary faſhion formerly prevailed with French authors, to preſent the public with their own Character, and this faſhion ſeems to have paſſed over to our country; Farquhar has drawn his character in a letter to a lady, and others of our writers I believe have given us their own miniatures. The French long cheriſhed this darling egotiſm; and there is a collection of theſe literary portraits in two bulky volumes. The brilliant Fleehier, and the refined St. Evremond, have framed and glazed their portraits. Every writer then conſidered his Character as neceſſary as his Preface. I confeſs myſelf much delighted with theſe ſelf-deſcriptions of "perſons whom no one "knows." I have formed a conſiderable collection of theſe portraits, and have placed them in my cabinet of curioſities, under the title of ſtrong likeneſſes of unknown perſons. Their vanity is too prominent to doubt their accuracy.

I ſhall not excite the reader's curioſity, without attempting it's gratification; and if he chuſes to ſee what now paſſes in the minds of many obſcure writers, whom he never will know, let him attend to

to the following Character, which may not be ſo ſingular as it appears.

There was, as a book in my poſſeſſion will teſtify, a certain verſe-maker, of the name of Cantenac, who, in 1662, publiſhed in the city of Paris, the above-mentioned volume, containing ſome thouſands of verſes, which were, as his countrymen expreſs it, *de ſa facon*, after his own way. He fell ſo ſuddenly into the darkeſt and deepeſt pit of oblivion, that not a trace of his memory would have remained, had he not condeſcended to give ample information of every particular relative to himſelf. He has acquainted us with his ſize, and tells us "that it is rare to ſee a man "ſmaller than himſelf. I have that in common "with all dwarfs, that if my head only were "ſeen, I ſhould be thought a large man." This atom in creation then deſcribes his oval and full face; his fiery and eloquent eyes; his vermil lips; his robuſt conſtitution, and his effervescent paſſions. He appears to have been a moſt petulant, honeſt, and diminutive being.

The deſcription of his intellect, is the object of our curioſity, and I ſelect the moſt ſtriking traits in his own words. "I am as ambitious as any "perſon can be; but I would not ſacrifice my ho "nour to my ambition. I am ſo ſenſible to con- "tempt, that I bear a mortal and implacable "hatred againſt thoſe who contemn me, and I "know I could never reconcile myſelf with them, "but I ſpare no attentions for thoſe I love; I "would give them my fortune and my life. I

" ſometimes lie; but generally in affairs of gallan-
" try, where I voluntarily confirm falſehoods by
" oaths, without reflection, for ſwearing with me
" is a habit. I am told that my mind is brilliant,
" and that I have a certain manner in turning a
" thought, which is quite my own. I am agree-
" able in converſation; though I confeſs I am
" often troubleſome; for I maintain paradoxes to
" diſplay my genius, which favour too much of
" ſcholaſtic ſubterfuges. I ſpeak too often and
" too long; and as I have ſome reading, and a
" copious memory, I am fond of ſhewing what-
" ever I know. My judgement is not ſo ſolid, as
" my wit is lively. I am often melancholy and
" unhappy; and this ſombrous diſpoſition proceeds
" from my numerous diſappointments in life. My
" verſe is preferred to my proſe; and it has been
" of ſome uſe to me, in pleaſing the fair ſex; poe-
" try is moſt adapted to perſuade women; but
" otherwiſe it has been of no ſervice to me, and
" has, I fear, rendered me unfit for many ad-
" vantageous occupations, in which I might have
" drudged. The eſteem of the fair has, however,
" charmed away my complaints. This good for-
" tune has been obtained by me, at the coſt of
" many cares, and an unſubdued patience; for I
" am one of thoſe, who, in affairs of love, will ſuf-
" fer an entire year, to taſte the pleaſures of
" one day."

This Character of Cantenac has ſome local features; for an Engliſh poet would hardly conſole himſelf with ſo much gaiety. The Frenchman's attachment

attachment to the ladies, ſeems to be equivalent to the advantageous occupations he had loſt. But as the miſeries of a literary man, without conſpicuous talents, are always the ſame at Paris, as in London, there are ſome parts of this Character of Cantenac, which appear to deſcribe them with truth. Cantenac was a man of honour; as warm in his reſentment as his gratitude; but deluded by literary vanity, he became a writer in proſe and verſe, and while he ſaw the proſpects of life cloſing on him, probably conſidered that the age was unjuſt. A melancholy example for certain volatile, and fervent ſpirits, who, by becoming authors, either ſubmit their felicity to the caprices of others, or annihilate the obſcure comforts of life, and, like him, having "been told that their mind is bril-"liant, and that they have a certain manner in "turning a thought," become writers, and complain that they are "often melancholy, owing to "their numerous diſappointments." Happy, however, if the obſcure, yet too ſenſible writer, can ſuffer an entire year, for the enjoyment of a ſingle day! But for this, a man muſt have been born in France.

On the Character of Dennis the Critic.

IT is an obſervation frequently made, by men of letters in converſation, whenever ſome renowned critic is mentioned, that "he was a very ill-"natured man." An obſervation which is fully verified by facts; ſo that ſometimes we are nearly tempted to ſuppoſe, that ill-nature is the ſpirit of criticiſm, The verbal or minor critics, are perſons of the ſlendereſt faculties, and the moſt irafcible diſpoſitions. What can we hope from men who have conſumed thirty pages in quarto, on the ſignification of one little word, and after this inſane diſcuſſion, have left the unhappy ſyllable to the mercy of future literary frenzy?

But there is a ſpecies of critics, who rather attach themſelves to modern, than to ancient writers; and who purſue and ſettle on a great genius, as ſummer flies attack the tails of the beſt fed horſes, The more fervid the ſeaſon, and the plumper the horſe, the livelier is the attack. They are born for the torment of the ingenious, and the gratification of the malicious of their age. It has too often happened, that a ſuperior writer has been mortified during his whole life, by ſuch a painful ſhadow. The anceſtors of theſe critics appear to have flouriſhed in the days of Terence, and this poet has diſtinguiſhed them by the honourable title of the *Malevoli*. Zoilus, who has left them

them his name, the patriarch of "true criticiſm," as Swift calls their talent, fell a martyr to their cauſe; for this great man was either burnt, or crucified, or ſtoned.

In the perſon of Dennis, we may contemplate the character of theſe diſturbers of literary repoſe. The mind of this Critic was endowed, not with refinement, but with ſubtlety; not with correctneſs, but with minuteneſs; not with quick ſenſibility, but with critical erudition. A prominent feature in his character, was that intellectual quality, called common ſenſe, which would have rendered him an uſeful citizen. A virtue in a ſadler, but a vice in a critic. In literature, common ſenſe is a penurious faculty, of which all the acquiſitions are mean, and of little value. If we allow him theſe qualities, we muſt utterly deny him that ſenſibility of taſte which feels the charms of an author, by a congeniality of ſpirit; that quick apprehenſion, which may occaſionally point out the wanderings of genius, but which oftener confirms the pleaſures we feel, by proving their propriety; nor had he that flexibility of intellect, which yields to the touch of the object before him; before he ventured to be pleaſed, he was compelled to conſult Ariſtotle.

His learning was the bigotry of literature. It was ever Ariſtotle explained by Dennis. But in the explanation of the obſcure text of his maſter, he was led into ſuch frivolous diſtinctions, and taſteleſs propoſitions, that his works deſerve inſpection, as examples of the manners of a true

mechanical critic; the genius of Homer would ſink, blended with the dullneſs of Dennis.

Several ſingular coincidences alone gave the ephemeron critic his temporary exiſtence. Criticiſm was a novelty at that period of our literature. He flattered ſome great men, and he abuſed three of the greateſt; this was one mode of ſecuring popularity; becauſe, by this contrivance, he divided the town into two parties; and the irafcibility and ſatire of Pope and Swift, were not leſs ſerviceable to him, than the partial panegyries of Dryden and Congreve. If inſulted genius had not noticed Dennis, Dennis in vain would have inſulted genius. Sometimes his ſtrictures, though virulent, were juſt; even Zoilus, doubtleſs, detected many defects in Homer. But ſuch criticiſms are only a kind of plate-powder, very uſeful to repoliſh the works of genius. The performances of our critic appear never to have been popular; and this fact is recorded by himſelf. Of the favourable opinion he entertained of his own powers, and the public neglect they received, when not ſupported by the malignant aid of ſatire, the following paſſages will ſufficiently prove. He obſerves in his Tracts, "if I had writ only the firſt treatiſe, I believe, that upon reading it, you will be of opinion, and far be preſumption from that belief, that I had deſerved better of the commonwealth of learning, than the authors of ſo many ſonorous trifles, who have been *too much encouraged*, while *I have been too much neglected*. The poſition, which is the ſubject of it, viz. That religion

religion is that which gives principally to great poetry it's ſpirit, it's ſublimity, it's vehemence, and it's ſtrongeſt enthuſiaſm, is *very clearly proved.*"

One more ſpecimen may be neceſſary. He adds, "that though criticiſm has flouriſhed for 2000 years, deſcending from antient Greece and Rome, to modern France and Italy, yet that neither Greece, nor Rome, nor France, nor modern Italy, has treated of this important point; but that it was *left for a perſon who has the honour of being your lordſhip's countryman,* to aſſert it, and demonſtrate it. If what I have ſaid may ſeem to ſome perſons, into whoſe hands theſe ſheets may happen to fall, to have too great a tincture of vanity in it, your lordſhip knows very well, that *perſons ſo much and ſo long oppreſſed as I have been,* have been always allowed to ſay things concerning themſelves, which in *others* might be *offenſive.*"

There is a degree of vanity and vexation in theſe extracts, of which the former is only excuſeable for the latter. His vanity we know was exceſſive, and this oppreſſion, of which he complains, might not be leſs imaginary than his alarm of being delivered over to the French, for the compoſition of a tragedy that could never be read. Dennis undoubtedly had laboured with zeal, which could never meet a reward; and perhaps, amidſt his critical labours, he turned often, with an aching heart, from their barren contemplation, to that

of the ſocial comforts he might have derived from his paternal ſaddles.

His occaſional ſtrictures on popular works had certainly a tranſient ſeaſon. Such criticiſms were aſſiſted by the activity of envy, and by the ſupineneſs of indolence, Theſe alſo were his beſt productions, but I muſt ſtill affirm that they were the beſt productions of a dull writer. A beautiful tragedy may be compoſed, which may ſerve the purpoſes of the Denniſes; and it's errors may fill their voluminous pamphlet; but alſo, it is very poſſible to conſtruct a tragedy which would famiſh the Denniſes, and at the ſame time be deſtitute of whatever can impart delight to the lover of poetry,

Dennis aſpired alſo to original compoſition. His verſe is the verſe of one who has learnt poetry, as the blind we know may practice the art; a mechanical operation performed by ſubſtantives and adjectives. His ſentiments are wild, and his lines irregular; turgid expreſſions in rumbling verſe; the painful throes of a muſe, who is made to produce monſters againſt the deſigns of nature. Such verſifiers are well deſcribed by Denham in this line; their works are

"Not the effect of poetry, but pains."

Yet Dryden, with the uſual partiality of friendſhip, deludes Dennis by eulogies on his poetry, and, in one of his Letters, publiſhed by our author, adviſes him to apply himſelf to the pindaric. After this, I believe, Dennis produced his long rambling Ode

Ode in praiſe of Dryden, which, perhaps, equals the worſt of Cowley's.

His proſe has at times animation, particularly when he warms into abuſe. His conceptions, indeed, were never delicate; but ſometimes their groſſneſs is ſtriking; as what he ſays of Puns, in one of his Letters, "there is as much difference between the ſilly ſatisfaction which we have from a quibble, and the raviſhing pleaſure which we receive from a beautiful thought, as there is betwixt a faint ſalute, and fruition."

His criticiſms are often ſo many caſtles in the air, for almoſt in every work he is propoſing and explaining ſome fantaſtical ſyſtem. In his long treatiſe on modern poetry, he labours to ſhew, that the ſtrong intereſt which the ancients felt in their poetry, was derived from that uſe of religion which their poets employed; and therefore, he concludes, that if religion is introduced into our poems, modern poetry will rival the ancient. But how falſe this ſyſtem is, criticiſm and experience have now poſitively decided. Polytheiſm indeed was a religion well adapted to poetical fancies; ſince nothing can be more poetical than an endleſs train of beings, diverſified in their characters, and diſtinguiſhed by their emblems. The brilliancy of imagination, the gaieties of deſcription, and the conflict of the paſſions, alike formed a human intereſt in the deities of the ancients. But the unity of our religion teaches only the leſſon of obedience, and throwing a veil over the myſterious deity, would conſider deſcription as impiety,

impiety, and ſilence as the only expreſſion of the human paſſions.

Having concluded what I had to obſerve, on the literary character of Dennis, I ſhall now conſider his moral one. The leſſon may not prove uninſtructive, for we ſhall have an opportuuity of contemplating how an ill-natured critie, is an ill-natured man, and that the perverſions of the head, are often ſo many particles of venom which fly from the heart.

The magiſterial deciſions of criticiſm, communicated a perſonal importance to this author. Accuſtomed to ſuſpend the ſcourge over the heads of the firſt writers of the age, it appears, that Dennis could not ſit at a table, or walk down a ſtreet, without exerting the deſpotic rudeneſs of a literary dictator. The brutal violence of his mind, was diſcoverable in his manners; an odd mixture of frantic enthuſiaſm, and groſs dullneſs. Pride now elevated, and vaunting, now depreſſed and ſore. How could the mind that devoted itſelf to the contemplation of maſter-pieces, only to reward it's induſtry, by detailing to the public their human frailties, experience one hour of amenity, one idea of grace, one generous expreſſien of ſenſibility? Pope's celebrated deſcription of the perſonal manners of our critie, is an exact repreſentation:

> Lo! Appius reddens at each word you ſpeak;
> And ſtares tremendous with a threatening eye,
> Like ſome fierce tyrant in old tapeſtry.

It is recorded of Dennis, that when he read this paſſage at a bookſeller's, he involuntarily exclaimed—By G— he means me!

Dennis had ſo accuſtomed himſelf to aſperity, and felt with ſuch facility and force, the irritation he gave and he received, that without having left on record but the ſuſpicion of one immoral action, (for it is ſaid he ſtabbed a man at college) we ſuſpect the improbity of his heart, when we recollect the licentiouſneſs of his pen. But this has ever been the characteriſtic of this race of critics. They attach to the writer they attack, an inveteracy, which is not permitted by common humanity. From their darkened cloſet, they ſuppoſe, that the affairs of civil life are ſuſpended, in an aweful pauſe, for their deciſions; and they think, when they have diſcovered the want of unity in a tragedy, that, in conſequence, the ſame want is immediately to take place among the public.

A critic reſembling Dennis, was Gaçon, in France. This Zoilus reproached La Motte with his blindneſs, and Dennis cruelly cenſured the feeble frame of Pope. Young, in his ſecond Epiſtle to Pope, ſarcaſtically alluded to Dennis, in theſe words,

> "My narrow-minded ſatire can't extend
> To Codrus' form, I'm not ſo much his friend;
> Himſelf ſhould publiſh that (the world agree)
> Before his works, or in the pillory."

Gaçon wrote "ſatyrical diſcourſes on all kinds of ſubjects," and compiled a volume of calumnies againſt

againſt the poet Rouſſeau, which he entitled an Anti-Rouſſeau; *Anti* was long a favourite title to the works of ſuch critics. Whenever there appeared a great genius, he immediately found an antipode.

An anecdote, little known, relative to Dennis, will cloſe his character. It appears, that the Provoked Huſband was acted for his benefit, which procured him about a hundred pounds. Thomſon and Pope generouſly ſupported the old critic, and Savage, who had nothing but a verſe to give, returned them poetical thanks, in the name of Dennis. When Dennis heard theſe lines repeated (for he was then blind) his critical ſeverity, and his natural brutality, overcame that grateful ſenſe he ſhould have expreſſed, of their kindneſs and their elegance. He ſwore "by G— they could be no one's but that *fool* Savage's." This, perhaps, was the laſt peeviſh ſnuff from the diſmal torch of criticiſm, for two days after was the redoubted Dennis numbered with "the mighty dead."

Criticiſm has thus been often only the natural effect of bad diſpoſitions; when ſevere, if founded on truth, it is not blamed; but this truth includes the idea of a critic convincing his reader, that he has a juſt taſte for the beauties of a compoſition; for that cenſure which only takes a partial review of a work, muſt be defective. There is a duty we owe to the public, when we defend the cauſe of taſte, but at the ſame time, there is a duty we owe to the author. A ſkilful cenſor will perform his taſk by a happy combination of humanity and criticiſm;

criticiſm; and it is elegantly ſaid of Boileau, by Voltaire, that the honey which this bee extracted from the flowers, ſoftened the ſharpneſs of the wound he inflicted.

A critic is only the footman of a man of genius; he ſhould reſpect his maſter, and not ſuffer the torch of criticiſm, which he carries before him, to ſcorch, but only to illuminate.

On Erudition and Philosophy.

IT is neceſſary to diſcriminate between Men of Erudition, and Men of Philoſophy. We muſt employ the French word *Erudit*, for want of a ſynonimous appellative.

A numerous claſs of ſtudents devote their days to reſearches in almoſt every ſpecies of knowledge; and without any profoundity of obſervation, or impulſe of genius, collect bodies of facts, which may ſerve as materials for literary ſpeculation. But of theſe, few have invigorated their reaſon, enlarged their mind, or ſciſed on thoſe graces which delight in elegant compoſition. We are at once aſtoniſhed and diſguſted at their vaſt reading; they ſeem to know every thing that requires not to be known.

With them, perſevering ſtudy ſtands in lieu of extenſive genius, and a long memory in place of a bright fancy. It is not who has greater talents, but who has read moſt. Philoſophy conſiſts of reflection; Erudition of reading. As one man cannot read much more than another, in the ſame given time, the Erudits, at a certain period of life, are, therefore, all nearly equal, in point of ability. It is not ſo in Philoſophy; there one man in a year may reach farther, than another in all his life; Time, therefore, may make an Erudit, but it is Genius only which can form a Philoſopher.

When the elaborate labours of an Erudit, are at length

length publiſhed, it is diſcovered, that he has no ſkill in the art of compoſition. This numerous race of literati, have no conception of that delight in compoſition, without which, the writer is in vain learned. Some conſider the pleaſures of literature as not only ſuperfluous, but criminal, and that the delight ariſing from the peruſal of exquiſite compoſition is derived from an effeminate and corrupt ſtate of mind; while others imagine that a reflection, they might happen to make, would only inſult their reader's underſtanding. An annaliſt is therefore preferred to an hiſtorian; Hume is cenſured, for intermingling with his lucid narrative, his acute reflections; and they affirm that they are capable of reflecting for themſelves. But this is neither modeſty nor truth.

Among reaſoning men, ſuch ſtudents have occaſioned a great odium to literature; and if, as it cannot be denied, the purſuits of letters have been often ſatiriſed, it has been owing to their laborious trifling, and impertinent information. Montaigne has declaimed againſt them, in various parts of his works. Frequently they fix on ſome fantaſtic topic, and fill their frivolous volume with the moſt laborious Erudition. Among theſe I have diſcovered the following extraordinary works. The hiſtory of Beards—and another of Wigs—of learned dirty men—of learned men married to Shrews—on literary Baſtards---on learned Miſanthropes---on paper Cloaths---and on terms of abuſe in the Hebrew, Latin, and Greek languages---There are likewiſe the hiſtory of Cats, and another of Rats,

Rats, both ſuppoſed to be written as a ſatire on theſe inept reſearches. It is not, indeed, ſufficient to write about, but to reaſon on antiquity; and a ſtudent hardly merits the honours of learning, whoſe ſcience conſiſts in an arid knowledge of words, or cuſtoms, and who renders ſome of the moſt pleaſing inveſtigations repulſive to men of taſte.

Do we not abuſe too often the word learning? He is honoured with the title, who has only retained by rote, obſolete cuſtoms, extinct characters, and whatever relates to paſt ages. But he who is more ſolicitous of familiariſing himſelf to his own times, and is converſant with whatever relates to his own century, who has little by rote, and a great deal by thinking, him we degrade to a lower department, and we call him a man of reading. He who hazards not a word in his latinity, but which is authoriſed by the uſe of Cicero, is ſaluted as a ſcholar; yet ſhould another not be quite ſo lexicographic in his compoſition, but as eloquent as Cicero, we ſhould conſider him as of inferior learning to his pedantic rival. If a claſſical ſcholar, verſifies in Greek an Engliſh poem, which, in the moſt favourable view, is only acting well the ſchool-boy in the maturity of life, we dignify him with eulogies, which the true poet, he verſifies, could not more have merited. For my part, I only conſider as learning that which a man knows by reflection. It is of no conſequence to *remember*, that ſuch a word is to be found in Cicero; that the name of one barbarian, ſucceed-

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ed the name of another barbarian; that ſuch faſhions prevailed in the reign of ſuch a monarch; and all that multifarious minute trifling which conſtitutes what moſt term *learning*. To *reaſon* on ſuch particulars may enlighten, but to *remember* them is nothing. There is more ingenuity in unriddling charades, and in writing acroſtics, than ſome, who are conſidered as eminent ſcholars, exert in their literary labours. It is as rare to find among men of genius, an Erudit, as among Erudits to diſcover a man of genius.

Such are they who ſtudy fourteen hours a day, and indefatigably puſh on their heavy ſyſtems throughout life. Schioppius detected 500 blunders in 120 pages of Scaliger; and Holſtenius diſcovered 8000 in Baronius! Madame Dacier affirmed ſhe had read Ariſtophanes 200 times; and one Berlugerius was ſo inſane a reader of Homer, that he was excommunicated for reading him at church. He at laſt, with reſtleſs impatience, undertook an excurſion to the fields of Troy, but is ſuppoſed to have loſt his way. One cannot but ſmile at the manner with which one of this venerable fraternity cloſes his Hiſtory of the World; "in my ſecond book" (ſays he) "the world may judge by my reflections and remarks, whether I have diſcernment and genius." The ſchool of low commentators is admirably depicted, by the terſe and lively taſte of Armſtrong:

> "The ſtrong-built pedant, who both night and day
> Feeds on the coarſeſt fare the ſchools beſtow,
> And crudely fattens at groſs Burman's ſtall."

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Many are familiar with the Latin and the Greeian compoſitions, whom the Latins and the Greeks, full of taſte and ſenſibility, would never have admitted into their ſociety.

Men of an elevated fancy, have ever treated theſe induſtrious ſtudents with great contempt. Hobbes ſaid, that had he read as much as ſome learned men, he had been as ignorant as they. Le Clerc obſerves, in his *Ars Critica*, that had two authors whom he mentions, read leſs and digeſted better, they had produced more uſeful works. Malebranche aſſerts, that the proper ſtudy of man is truth, conſidered as it relates to himſelf; that this can only be found in Philoſophy, and that hiſtory only preſents us with trivial or imperfect copies. They conceived more truth to be contained in a moral precept, than in an hiſtorical fact; and they, therefore, preferred the cultivation of the underſtanding, to that of the memory.

This erronous ſyſtem has, indeed, been oppoſed; and Bolingbroke obſerves from an ancient, that "Hiſtory is Philoſophy teaching by Example." The cenſure of Malebranche will, however, be juſtly pointed at all hiſtories compoſed by the *mere Erudits*. A maſs of minute facts may prove the author to be a profound antiquary, but a ſhallow philoſopher; and it may be obſerved of hiſtorical compoſition, that the philoſopher generally begins at thoſe periods where the antiquary concludes.

Theſe Erudits are characteriſed by an enormous paſſion for collecting books. They were once called

called *Helluones Librorum.* But this book gluttony is without digeſtion or taſte.* An indulgence for the bibliomania, the taſte for claſſing books, and the judgment ſhewn in their various editions, are doubtleſs innocent objects, till they render a man ridiculous. The owner becomes ſo deeply read in titles and indexes, that often he who had ſufficient talent to form a catalogue, has conceived

* The following notices of theſe collectors are curious; the firſt I find in the Pithæana, in an explanatory note by Maiſeaux. "BIBLIOTAPHE, on appelle Bibliotaphe, ou *Tombeau des Livres*, celui qui ayant quelque Livre rare et curieux ne le communique á perſonne; mais le garde ſous la clef, et l'enterre, pour ainſi dire, dans ſon Cabinet."

Dr. Wendeborn very judiciouſly obſerves, that "the price given in public ſales, for what are called *Editiones principes*, have often aſtoniſhed him, and are not conſiſtent with reaſon, which, however, with thoſe who are called Dilettanti, may be out of the queſtion." Such literary imbecilities are tranſmitted from poſſeſſor to poſſeſſor, and are often exhibited at Book-ſales, when the hammer of the bookſeller has more than once fallen from his hand, in aſtoniſhment at the prices he received. Koecherus has written a Treatiſe on Literary Idolatry. To conclude this note by a characteriſtic anecdote, I ſhall give one of Tom Hearne, which the late Mr. Warton has inſerted in his Eſſay on Spenſer. When this laborious antiquary publiſhed the Chronicle of Robert of Glouceſter, he entered into a warm defence of the *old black letter*, and ſays, it is a reproach to us, that the B. L. which was ſo much in uſe in our grandfather's days, ſhould be now, as it were, diſuſed; and (he adds) "though I have taken ſo much pleaſure in peruſing the Engliſh Bible of the year 1541, yet 'tis nothing equal to that I ſhould take in turning over that of the year 1539!" Indeed, ſuch is the propenſity of theſe ſtudents, that ſome great commentators on

conceived himſelf capable of adding a volume to it of his own. To theſe dull poſſeſſors of rich libraries, we cannot but obſerve, that the acquiſition of the fineſt muſical inſtruments, imparts not the art of the muſician.

Such an one will, probably, be a man of mean talents, and ſlender judgment. He will collect every thing, till he embarraſſes his feeble faculties; and amidſt all the information poſſible, will ſtand irreſolute and ignorant. Diſcordant opinions he

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on Shakeſpeare, it is ſaid, are not allowed to viſit the library at Cambridge without a guard, as it has been diſcovered, that theſe amateurs are not the moſt honeſt men, amidſt a black letter collection. A number of anecdotes prove this to have been an old habit. Pinelli furniſhed his famous Bibliotheca chiefly by his ſkill in an art which lies much more in the dexterity of his hands, than his head. Biſhop Moore, Sir Thomas Bodley, Mr. Umfreville, Dr. Rawlinſon, and a long et cetera, were all of them the moſt celebrated collectors in the country, and every one a bibliothecal thief. Sir Robert Saville, writing to Sir Robert Cotton, appointing an interview with Sir Thomas Bodley (the great founder of the Bodleian Library) cautions Sir Robert that "If he held anie boke ſo deare as thatt hee would bee loathe to loſe it, he ſhould *not let Sir Thomas out of his ſight*, but ſet the boke aſide beforehand." A ſimilar anecdote is told of Biſhop Moore —A gentleman calling on a friend who poſſeſſed a very choice library, found him buſy in *hiding his beſt books*, and locking up as many as he could. On enquiring the reaſon of this odd occupation the Bibliopoliſt replied—Don't you know the Biſhop of Ely dines with me to day?—At Exeter, a collection of Medals was left lately at the death of the Donor, with a paper, purporting that when ſuch a perſon (who was a brother collector) ſhould deſire to examine them, he ſhould be cloſely watched by two perſons on each ſide of him!

he perceives; but to elicit truth from their concuſſion, demands that ſkill and energy which few Erudits have poſſeſſed. When one is exerciſed in collecting facts, but a ſlight attention is required, and while the higher faculties are quieſcent, the infatuated compiler conſiders them as active; but, in truth, it is only the hand that tranſcribes, not the head that thinks. The common-place book is crouded with facts, while the mind makes not the acquiſition of one ſolitary idea. This Erudition is a groſs luſt of the mind; it ſeiſes on every thing indiſcriminately, yet produces nothing; it is paſſion without fruition.

A philoſopher having the ſame topics, will ſelect the leading circumſtances only as his chief authorities. The art of rejecting, is not leſs important than the art of accumulating; half, ſays Heſiod, is more than the whole. He who wearies all, without wearying himſelf, ſmothers the ſparks of his fire, by the heaps of his fuel; but a philoſopher lights a little wood with the clear and durable flame of genius. It is, perhaps, not too bold to affirm, that the diſcoveries of meditation are more numerous than thoſe of reading; for meditation can penetrate into thoſe ages where facts are unrecorded. It has been ſometimes found, that a philoſopher, without any other data than his own meditations, has accounted for circumſtances, which have been confirmed by facts, long afterwards diſcovered by the tardy dullneſs of the torpid antiquary. Meditation anticipates evidence, or educes from evidence novel truths.

Let us contemplate theſe Erudits, as the critics of a claſſical author. Such critics are more delighted by an obſcure expreſſion in a fine ſentence, than with the ſentence itſelf; as oculiſts are not diſpleaſed when their friends have infirm eyes. But even the humble province of annotation, by a philoſophic genius, becomes no contemptible labour; and Johnſon's notes, which are not the moſt eſteemed by his unworthy fraternity, frequently appear like an accidental wave rolling with vehemence down a ſtagnant ſtream.

Thoſe violent panegyrics with which they idoliſe an author, are as inſincere as they are diſguſtful. When a pedant throws an offering of flowers, on the altar of the Graces, he acts not with the ardour, but the hypocriſy of devotion. We have ſeen theſe Erudits bring forward ſome forgotten writer, and who deſerved to be ſo, with a pomp of eulogium that the greateſt cannot merit; and even the legitimate applauſe due to celebrated authors, they render ridiculous. Theſe ponderous minds have been well deſcribed by Voltaire, when he obſerves of Dacier, *Qu'il connoiſſoit tout des anciens hors la grace et la fineſſe.* Senſibility of taſte rarely directs their choice of an author; but merely the accidental collection of a number of notes, and often a more trivial circumſtance. We have had new editions of obſolete writers, becauſe their commentator was born in the ſame town, or in the ſame kingdom. Authors have been more frequently given for the notes, than what ſhould be, the notes for the author. Thus Duchat publiſhed editions

tions of ſeveral obſcure writers, becauſe, having directed his reſearches to the middle ages, he was deſirous to diſcharge his adverſaria on the public. Sealiger preferred Virgil to Homer, becauſe Virgil was his fellow-countryman, and Dacier preferred Homer to all paſt and future poets, becauſe he was the moſt ancient.

He who has grown hoary in Erudition, becomes untractable by his vanity. He regards his hourly diſcoveries with a ſpirit of ſelf-exultation, which places him far above the attainments of the philoſopher. He who is directed by reaſon, and relies more on his thinking, than his Erudition, makes few, and often late, diſcoveries; he who cultivates taſte, often turns, with diſpleaſure, from unimportant topics; but he who collects and arranges facts, felicitates himſelf with new and facile acquirements, and as he explores the interminable deſert of Erudition, amaſſes a vaſt and mingled treaſure, and exults in an apparent ſplendour. Milton deſcribes the Erudit, who, he ſays,

> "Uncertain and unſettled ſtill remains;
> Deep verſt in books, and ſhallow in himſelf;
> Crude, or intoxicate, collecting toys,
> As children gathering pebbles on the ſhore.
>
> *Paradiſe Regained.*"

Whenever learning is made to conſiſt in words or facts, it is amuſing to obſerve it's effects, operating on it's votariſts. The inſolence of an antiquary has no parallel, whenever a ſubject congenial to his ſtudies is agitated; becauſe having,

with much commendable pains, and many patient years, traced the object through all it's possible connections, he knows what facts can be related, and is conscious that the speaker cannot have acquired more than himself. This gives birth to many extravagancies of lettered vanity; and I have observed two recondite antiquaries, kindling in dispute, while one had, perhaps, only a month's, or a day's more reading than his adversary. No class of students have more exalted notions of their talents, than good linguists; for having perfected themselves in the verbal science, they consider that words are science itself, and do not recollect that they are but the keys of the gates.

Such is the character of those who would place a convenient limit to the human faculties, and satisfied with digging out from the graves of time, some dead fact, consider knowledge to be obtainable by the pertinacity of mechanical labour. But as a linguist may combine and know every word in a language, and yet never attain to any skill in composition, so the Erudit may heap fact upon fact, and, notwithstanding, never enlighten. Philosophy alone can throw the creative beam of light over the dark chaos of Erudition, and awaken into order and beauty the surrounding mass.

But even Philosophy will not be sufficient to render learning attractive; we must also employ the elegancies of composition, and cover the aridity of research with the freshest roses of taste. Most of the French academicians, in their learned memoirs, have claims on our applause and imitation;

tion; they inſtruct us to give the bloom of youth to the wrinkles of learning, and while we form an accurate and lucid recital of facts, to interweave reflections which intereſt, and to embelliſh with a ſtyle which enchants. We muſt have learning to collect facts; judgment to ſeiſe on thoſe which converge to one point, and a brilliant taſte to animate and adorn.

On Poetical Opuscula.

PLINY, in an Epiſtle to Tuſcus, adviſes him to intermix among his ſeverer ſtudies, the ſoftening charms of poetry; and notices a ſpecies of poetical compoſition, which merits critical animadverſion. I ſhall quote Pliny, in the language of his elegant tranſlator. He ſays, "theſe pieces comm nly go under the title of Poetical Amuſements; but theſe amuſements have ſometimes gained as much reputation to their authors, as works of a more ſerious nature. It is ſurpriſing how much the mind is entertained and enlivened by theſe little poetical compoſitions, as they turn upon ſubjects of gallantry, ſatire, tenderneſs, politeneſs, and every thing, in ſhort, that concerns life, and the affairs of the world."

This ſpecies of poetry can only exiſt in an age when refinement is introduced into literature, as well as into every thing elſe. We muſt, therefore, look for it, in the preſent day, among a people the moſt refined among it's neighbours; and we obſerve, that it has been carried to it's utmoſt perfection by the French. It has been diſcriminated by them, from the maſs of poetry, under the apt title of "*La Poeſie legere,*" and ſometimes it has been ſignificantly called "*Vers de Societé.*" The French writers have formed a body of this fugitive poetry, which no European nation can rival; and to which both the language and genius, of that

once

once gay and poliſhed people, appear to be greatly favourable.

The "*Poeſies legeres*" are not, as their title would appear to import, merely compoſitions of a light and gay turn, but are equally employed as a vehicle for tender and pathetic ſentiment. They are never long, for they are conſecrated to the amuſement and delight of ſociety. Their ſubjects are illimitable; but it is required, that ſince the author is indulged to ſport in ſmall extent, and on a variety of topics, that the undeſcribable power of originality, give a value to every little production. The author appears to have compoſed them for his pleaſure, not for his glory; and he charms his readers, becauſe he ſeems careleſs of their approbation.

The verſification cannot be too refined, melodious and glowing, it ſhould diſplay all the graces of poetry. Every delicacy of ſentiment, muſt find it's delicacy of ſtyle, and every tenderneſs of thought, muſt be ſoftened by the tendereſt tones. Nothing trite or trivial, either in the expreſſion or the thought, muſt enfeeble and chill the imagination; nor muſt the ear be denied it's gratification, by a rough or careleſs verſe. In theſe works nothing is pardoned; a word may diſturb, a line may deſtroy the charm.

The paſſions of the poet, may form the ſubjects of his verſe. It is in theſe writings he delineates himſelf; he reflects his taſtes, his deſires, his humours, his amours, and even his defects. In other poems, the poet diſappears under the feigned cha-

racter he aſſumes; here alone he ſpeaks, here he acts. He makes a confident of the reader, intereſts him in his hopes, and his ſorrows; we admire the poet, and conclude with eſteeming the man. In theſe effuſions the lover may not unſucceſsfully urge his complaints. They may form a compliment for a patron, or a congratulation for an artiſt; a vow of friendſhip, or a hymn of gratitude.

Theſe poems have often, with great ſucceſs, diſplayed pictures of Manners; domeſtic deſcriptions are ever pleaſing; and it is here that the poet colours the objects with all the hues of life, and the variations of nature. Reflections muſt, however, be artfully interwoven, in a compreſſed and rapid manner. Moral inſtruction muſt not be amplified; theſe are pieces devoted to the fancy; and while reflection is indulged, the imagination feels itſelf defrauded; a ſcene may be painted throughout the poem; a ſentiment muſt be conveyed in a verſe. In the Grongar Hill of Dyer, we diſcover ſome ſtrokes which may ſerve to exemplify this criticiſm. The poet, contemplating the diſtant landſcape, obſerves,

> "A ſtep methinks may paſs the ſtream,
> So little, diſtant dangers ſeem;
> So we miſtake the future's face,
> Ey'd thro' Hope's deluding glaſs."

Moral reflections, which are uſually obvious and tedious, if thus rapidly ſtruck off, contraſt with great beauty the lighter and more airy parts.

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It muſt not be ſuppoſed, that becauſe theſe productions are conciſe, they have, therefore, the more facility; we muſt not conſider the genius of a poet diminutive, becauſe his pieces are ſo; nor muſt we call them, as a fine ſonnet has been called, a difficult trifle. A circle may be very ſmall, yet it may be as mathematically beautiful and perfect as a larger one. To ſuch compoſitions we may apply the obſervation of an ancient critic, that though a little thing gives perfection, yet perfection is not a little thing.

The poet, to ſucceed in theſe hazardous pieces, muſt be an amiable voluptuary; alike poliſhed by an intercourſe with the world, as with the ſtudies of taſte; to whom labour is negligence; refinement a ſcience, and art a nature. Genius will not always be ſufficient to impart that grace of amenity which ſeems peculiar to thoſe who are accuſtomed to elegant ſociety. Many of the French nobility, who cultivated poetry, have, therefore, oftener excelled in theſe poetical amuſements, than more profeſſed poets. France once delighted in the amiable and ennobled names of Nivernois, Boufflers, and St. Aignan; they have not been conſidered as unworthy rivals of Chaulieu and Bernard, of Voltaire and Greſſet. But theſe productions are more the effuſions of taſte than genius; and it is not ſufficient that the poet is inſpired by the muſe, but he muſt alſo ſuffer his conciſe page to be poliſhed by the hand of the Graces.

All the minor odes of Horace, and the entire Anacreon, are compoſitions of this kind; effuſions of the heart, and pictures of the imagination, which were produced in the convivial, the amatory, and the penſive hour. Our nation has not always been ſucceſsful in theſe performances; they have not been kindred to it's genius. With Charles II. ſomething of a gayer and more airy taſte was communicated to our poetry; but it was deſultory, incorrect, and wild. Waller, both by his habits, and his genius, was well adapted to excel in this lighter poetry; and he has often attained the perfection which the ſtate of the language then permitted. Prior has a variety of ſallies; but his humour is ſometimes groſs, and his verſification is ſometimes embarraſſed. He knew the value of theſe charming pieces; and he had drank of this burgundy in the vineyard itſelf. He has ſome tranſlations, and ſome plagiariſms; but ſome of his verſes to Chloe are eminently airy and pleaſing. A diligent ſelection from our fugitive poetry, might perhaps preſent us with many of theſe minor poems; but the *Vers de Societé* form a ſpecies of poetical compoſition which may ſtill be employed with great ſucceſs.

On "the Enlightened Public," and "the Age of Reason."

RICHARDSON makes a pleaſing compariſon of national virtues, which, ſays he, are firſt like the ſeed, which produces the blade, then the green ear, and laſtly the ripe corn. A progreſſive ſtate is obſervable in the moral, like that in the natural world, and may alſo be traced in the character of an individual, as well as in that of a people.

But it is not with the human head, as with the human heart. The perfection of any virtue is obtainable, but perhaps never that, of knowledge; the actions of a hero are perfect, but the works of a ſcholar may in time be found erroneous; Alexander is ſtill our hero, but Ariſtotle has ceaſed to be our preceptor. Virtue is ſimilar and permanent, for an action of benevolence, or heroiſm, can never change in it's nature; but a ſyſtem of philoſophy, or a ſchool of taſte, muſt be annihilated by new philoſophies and new taſtes.

Some ſpeculative moderns have formed extravagant notions of that almoſt unimaginable perfection, to which human knowledge is rapidly conducting us. Hartley, in one of his ſublime and incomprehenſible reveries, leaves it to the knowledge of the next age to trace and comprehend. Some living philoſophers, who are only adding the Engliſh denſity of thinking to the French ſubtilty of fancy, conjecture that we may ſo improve our

organiſation, as to extend our duration; that the mind may attain an infinite perfectibility; and that the intellectual faculties are tranſmiſſible from the parent to the ſon, as ſometimes are the features and the habits. Philoſophical conjecture rolling with this oſcillatory motion, is merely an inebriation of poetry.

We are, however, inceſſantly reminded of the *enlightened* ſtate of the public; but the teſtimony of authors becomes ſuſpicious, for in perſuading us that we are thus illuminated, they infer by implication that they are ſingularly ſo, ſince they give us very uſeful inſtruction. The expreſſion was, I think, firſt the happy coinage of Voltaire, made current by his numerous diſciples; Voltaire adored the public and himſelf; and this artful expreſſion is at once imprinted with adulation and egotiſm.

It is certain that in former periods the human mind ſhot from a radical vigour, and flouriſhed in the richeſt luxuriance. Among the ancients, the fine and mechanical arts have been conſidered to have exceeded our happieſt efforts; and as for the intellectual powers and the moral duties, though moſt of the compoſitions of theſe ancients have been loſt, yet enough have remained to ſerve as models for our greateſt poets; to inſtruct our orators in the arts of eloquence; our hiſtorians in the compoſition of hiſtory, and to leave nothing for our moraliſts, but an amplification of the obſervations of Seneca and Epictetus.

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Had one of our modern philoſophers lived in thoſe ages, would he not, in the enthuſiaſm of his meditations, have expreſſed the flattering ſentiment now ſo prevalent; and throwing his glance into remote futurity, have prognoſticated a ſaturnian age, when every citizen ſhould be a philoſopher, and the univerſe one entire Rome? But it is the error of men, who, preſuming to deſcribe at ſo vaſt an interval, imagine circumſtances and connexions which have no exiſtence; as it is often found that lands, which appeared united when obſerved remotely, are in reality eternally ſeparated by the ocean.

Among the moſt ſanguine, and the moſt ſingular of modern philoſophers, is the worthy Abbè de Saint Pierre. The honeſty of his heart exceeded the rectitude of his underſtanding. His project of "An Univerſal Peace," by the infelicity of his ſtyle, could find no readers; a philanthropiſt as ſingular, but more eloquent, the celebrated Rouſſeau, embelliſhed the neglected labour, enabled us to read the performance, and perceive it's humane imbecility. It was no dull conception of a Dutch trader, who having inſcribed on his ſign the words "Perpetual Peace," had painted under it, a church-yard. Our good Abbè had a notion that an age was not diſtant, when ſuch would be the progreſs of that maſs of light, which was daily gathering, that it would influence every ſpecies of knowledge, and penetrate to the loweſt orders of ſociety. This future generation is to be remarkable for the force of it's reaſon, and the ſeverity of

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it's truth. It is therefore only to permit works of utility; to contemn the ornaments of eloquence, and the charms of poetry; but it may be neceſſary to obſerve, that our prophet was neither an orator nor a poet. He was once preſent at the recitation of one of thoſe works which are only valued for the graces of their compoſition, and the felicity of their manner. A performance of ſuch taſte would not therefore be read by the more reaſonable beings of his metaphyſical age. He appeared frigid and unmoved, while the audience was enraptured. His opinion was aſked; he ſmiled, and ſaid—"It is a thing which is YET thought to be fine!"

Another of theſe chimerical, yet grand ſpeculators, appears to me to have been the celebrated Leibnitz, who conceived the extravagant notion of forming one nation of all Europe; for he propoſed to reduce Europe under one temporal power, in the Emperor, and under one ſpiritual, in the Pope; and to conſtruct an univerſal philoſophical language. This great ſcholar is an example of the fatal attachment which a ſuperior mind may experience for a ſyſtem of which it is blindly enamoured, and to which it ſacrifices it's own ſenſations, and it's own convictions. Leibnitz was a genuine philoſopher, and a friend to humanity; his project of an univerſal language evinces this; but having once fixed on a ſyſtem, he yielded up that deareſt intereſt to a philoſopher, the proſperity of the human mind; for what tyrant could have forged more permanent chains for intellectual

freedom, than placing man under two ſuch powers? If this project had been poſſible to effect, the other of the philoſophical language had been uſeleſs; philoſophy then would not have been allowed a language.

He who thinks, will perceive in every enlightened nation, three kinds of people; an inconſiderable number inſtructed by reaſon, and glowing with humanity; a countleſs multitude, barbarous and ignorant, intolerant and inhoſpitable; and a vacillating people with ſome reaſon and humanity, but with great prejudices, at once the half-echoes of philoſophy, and the adherents of popular opinion. Can the *public* be denominated *enlightened?* Take an extenſive view among the various orders of ſociety, and obſerve how folly ſtill wantons in the vigour of youth, and prejudice ſtill ſtalks in the ſtubbornneſs of age.

To trace the human mind as it exiſts in a people, would be the only method to detect this fallacious expreſſion. The unenlightened numbers, who are totally uninfluenced by the few, live in a foul world of their own creation. The moral arithmetician, as he looks for the ſum total of the unenlightened public, muſt reſemble the algebraiſt, who riots in incalculable quantities, and who ſmiles at the ſimple ſavage, whoſe arithmetic extends not further than the number of three.

In a metropolis, we contemplate the human mind in all it's inflections. If we were to judge of men by the condition of their *minds,* (which perhaps is the moſt impartial manner of judging) we

ſhould

ſhould not conſult the year of their birth, to date their ages; and an intellectual regiſter might be drawn up, on a totally different plan from our parochial ones. A perſon may, according to the vulgar era, be in the maturity of life, when by our philoſophical epocha he is born in the tenth century. That degree of mind which regulated the bigotry of a monk in the middle ages, may be diſcovered in a modern rector. An adventurous ſpirit in a red coat, who is almoſt as deſirous (to uſe the wit of South) to receive a kiſs from the mouth of a cannon, as from that of his miſtreſs, belongs to the age of chivalry, and if he ſhould compoſe verſes, and be magnificiently prodigal, he is a gay and noble troubadour. A ſarcaſtic philoſopher, who inſtructs his fellow citizens, and retires from their ſociety, is a contemporary with Diogenes; and he who reforming the world, graces inſtruction with amenity, may be placed in the days of Plato. Our vulgar politicians muſt be arranged among the Roundheads and Olivers, and Tom Paine himſelf is ſo very ancient as to be a contemporary of Shimei. The reſult of our calculations would be, that the enlightened public form an inconſiderable number.

It muſt however be confeſſed, that what knowledge has been accumulated by modern philoſophy, cannot eaſily periſh; the art of printing has imparted ſtability to our intellectual ſtructures, in what depends on the mechanical preſervation. A ſingular ſpectacle has, therefore, been exhibited; and it is ſometimes urged by thoſe who contem-

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plate, with pleaſing aſtoniſhment, the actual progreſs of the human mind, as a proof of the immutability of truth, that in the preſent day, every enlightened individual, whether he reſides at Paris, at Madrid, or at London, now thinks alike; no variation of climate, no remoteneſs of place, not even national prejudices, more variable and more remote than either, deſtroy that unanimity of opinion, which they feel on certain topics eſſential to human welfare.

This appears to be a ſpecious argument in favour of the enlightened public. But we ſhould recollect, that this unanimity of opinion, which ſo frequently excites ſurpriſe, proceeds from their deriving their ideas from the ſame ſources; at Paris, at Madrid, and at London, the ſame authors are read, and, therefore, the ſame opinions are formed.

Thus we account for this unanimity of opinion; and we may now reaſonably enquire whether *unanimity of opinion*, always indicates *permanent truth?* It is certain that very extravagant opinions were once univerſally received; does any one deny that ſome of our modern opinions are marvelloufly extravagant? May we not ſay to the greateſt genius, look at what your equals have done, and obſerve how frequently they have erred. Reflect, that whenever an Ariſtotle, a Deſcartes, and a Newton appeared, they formed a new epocha in the annals of human knowledge, it is not unreaſonable to add one, among your thouſand conjectures, and ſay, that their future rivals may

trace

trace new connections, and collect new facts, which may tend to annihilate the ſyſtems of their predeceſſors. Is not opinion often local, and ever diſguiſed by cuſtom? is not what we call truth often error? and are not the paſſions and ideas of men of ſo very temporary a nature, that they ſcarcely endure with their century? This enlightened public may diſcover that their notions become obſolete, and that with new ſyſtems of knowledge, and new modes of exiſtence, their books may be cloſed for their ſucceſſors, and only conſulted by the curious of a future generation, as we now examine Ariſtotle and Deſcartes, Ariſtophanes and Chaucer. Our learning may no more be their learning, than our faſhions will be their faſhions. Every thing in this world is faſhion.

It may alſo be conjectured, that amidſt the multitude of future diſcoveries, the original authors of our own age, the Newtons and the Lockes, may have their conceptions become ſo long familiariſed, as to be incorporated with the novel diſcoveries, as truths ſo inconteſtible, that very few ſhall even be acquainted with their firſt diſcoverers. It would therefore appear, that the juſtneſs, as well as the extravagance of our authors, are alike inimical to their future celebrity.

But this inſtability never attends the noble exertions of virtue. Whoever immortaliſes his name, by an action of patriotiſm, or of philanthropy, will meet the certain admiration of poſterity. To render a ſervice to another is in the power of the meaneſt individual; but to aggran-

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diſe the gentle affections into ſublime paſſions, to riſe from the ſocial circle to the public weal, to extend our ordinary life through years of glory, is performing that which once raiſed men into demi-gods.

Of Licensers of the Press.

IN the hiſtory of literary oppreſſion, a prominent event will be that of the employing of a vigilant centinel on the thoughts, as well as on the bodies of authors. The inſtitution of Licenſers of the Preſs, or Cenſors of Books, was the laſt hope of deſpairing bigotry; and not only, for a conſiderable time, retarded the acceleration of philoſophy, but may be ſaid to have effected a temporary annihilation; for what author has ſo little vanity as to write what muſt be refuſed the honours of publication?

Had not ſeveral accidental circumſtances eſtabliſhed the freedom of the preſs, it might be difficult, by a retrograde calculation, to fix on that low degree, at which, to the preſent moment, popular opinion, with a ſomniferous ſtability, had reſted. Europe had now been more barbarous than in her cloudieſt ages; for the preſs had become an inſtrument, not to reſtrain, but to extend; not to undermine, but to prop; not to wreſtle with, but to cheriſh thoſe inhuman prejudices, which were once dignified by the holy titles of Religion and Politics. A Locke and a Monteſquieu had never exiſted for the world, and at this day we ſhould have admired, like our predeceſſors, the ſubtilties of an Aquinas, and the doctrines of a Filmer. Our ideas had been fabricated in an inquiſitorial forge, and though they would not have

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conſiſted of a variety of forms, they would not have wanted that heat which might have given durability.

The Inquiſitors having long examined and deprecated a vaſt multitude of publications, which the freedom of foreign preſſes allowed, and their critical occupations after the revolution of Luther, becoming greater and more important at every hour, they were deſirous of aſſiſting thoſe of their numerous adherents, who were fearful of employing their own eyes, and truſting to their own ſenſations, by preſerving them in their antiquated ceeity. It was now they invented the ſcheme of printing catalogues of prohibited books, which they called EXPURGATORY INDEXES Almoſt every new work augmented theſe voluminous catalogues; and, perhaps, in ſome reſpect, they invited readers to publications which might not otherwiſe have attracted notice. It is curious to reflect on the uſe which the two parties made of them; for while the pious Catholic croſſed himſelf at every title, and frequently breathed an oriſon for the eternal damnation of the authors, the Heretics on the contrary would purchaſe no book which had not been inſerted in theſe indexes. The Heretic had certainly a finer taſte, and a more lively entertainment in reading, than the pious Catholic; for the moſt animated and the moſt valuable authors, have found their way into theſe indexes. Nothing then, but orthodox dullneſs, was exempt from cenſure. Among the cruel abſurdities of that day, is an edict from the French King, to forbid the unfortunate

unfortunate profeſſor Ramus the reading of his own works, and which, ſo very frequently, is the only real pleaſure ſome writers receive from their labours.

The venerable authors of theſe indexes, long indeed, had reaſon to ſuppoſe, that a ſubmiſſive credulity was attached to the human character; and, therefore, they conſidered that the publications of their adverſaries required no other anſwer, than an inſertion in their indexes. Literary controverſy was threatened to be eternally annihilated, by this conciſe and commodious mode. They multiplied editions throughout Europe; but the Heretics as induſtriouſly reprinted them with ample prefaces, and uſeful annotations. In our country, Dr. James, of Oxford, republiſhed an index, with proper animadverſions. One of their portions included, a liſt of thoſe Heretics whoſe heads were condemned as well as their works. It is curious to obſerve, that as theſe indexes were formed in different countries, the opinions were diametrically oppoſite to each other; the examiners in Italy, under the title of the Council of Trent, prohibited what thoſe in the Netherlands admitted; and ſome inquiſitors, who complained of the partial conduct of theſe catalogues, were, in their turn, placed by the confraternity in their indexes; retaliation ſucceeded retaliation. To the preſent moment ſuch indexes are formed.

When theſe inſertions were found of no other uſe, than to diſperſe the criminal volumes, the eccleſiaſtical arm was employed in burning them in public

public places; and among ſeveral anecdotes of ſending authors to the flames before their time, Monnoie diſcovered in one of theſe ſepulchral fires, that an edition of Joſephus had been burnt, not, ſays he, becauſe the ancient author was a jew, but that the tranſlator was a janſeniſt. Theſe literary conflagrations ſerved the purpoſes of bookſellers; and the publiſher of Eraſmus's Colloquies intrigued for the burning of the work, on purpoſe to raiſe the ſale; and he ſold 24,000. The curioſity of man is raiſed by difficulties, and it is with the freedom of the mind, as with that herb, which the more it is trodden on, grows the more vigorouſly.

The fancy of the poet, and the veracity of the hiſtorian, were alike amputated, by cenſors of books; a ſimile, or even an epithet, might ſend the immortal bard to the galleys, and as for the diſcernment and freedom to be expected in an hiſtorian, whoſe genius was firſt to be cloſeted with ſuch an examiner, we may form an idea, by quoting the uſual expreſſion in the privileges. In Nani's Hiſtory of Venice, it is allowed to be printed, becauſe it contained *nothing againſt princes*. This mode of approbation ſhews either that princes were immaculate, or hiſtorians were ignorant or falſe. The hiſtory of Guicciardini is ſtill ſcarred with the mercileſs wound of the Papiſtic Cenſor; for Le Clerc informs us that a curious account of the origin and increaſe of Papal Power is wanting in the third and fourth book of his Hiſtory. Velli's hiſtory of France would have been

been an admirable work, had it not been printed at Paris. A book in Spain paſſes through ſix courts before it can be publiſhed; and in Portugal, it is ſaid, through ſeven. A book in thoſe countries is ſuppoſed to recommend itſelf to the reader, by the information that it is publiſhed with *all* the neceſſary privileges.

Our literary hiſtory has been ſo little perpetuated, either by tradition, or by record, that there are but few individual topics which can be purſued through a concatenation of events. Our authors have groaned under the leaden arm of Licenſers of the Preſs, and no doubt many intereſting facts have periſhed, which would have inſtructed the preſent generation. The Poems of Lord Brooke, if they cannot delight, accidentally inſtruct poſterity in the value of freedom of thinking. In this book one is ſurpriſed at finding twenty of it's firſt pages deficient. Mr. Malone has diſcovered, that theſe pages contained a poem on religion, which was cancelled by the order of Archbiſhop Laud, who probably conſidered that religion could not be ſecure in the hands of any one but an Archbiſhop.

The ignorance and ſtupidity of theſe cenſors, became as remarkable as their exterminating ſpirit. The noble ſimile of Milton, of Satan with the riſing-ſun, in the firſt book of the Paradiſe Loſt, had almoſt occaſioned the ſuppreſſion of that immortal epic: it was ſuppoſed to contain treaſon. The tragedy of Arminius, by one Paterſon, who was an amanuenſis of the poet Thomſon, was intended

intended for repreſentation, but the Dramatic Cenſor refuſed a licence: As Edward and Eleanora was not permitted to be performed, being conſidered a party work, our ſagacious State-Critic, imagined that Paterſon's *own* play was in the ſame predicament, by being in the ſame hand writing! The French have retained many curious facts of the ſingular ineptitude of theſe cenſors. Mallebranche ſaid, that he could never obtain an approbation for his Reſearch after Truth, becauſe it was unintelligible to his cenſors; and at length Mezeray, the hiſtorian, approved of it as a book of geometry. Latterly in France, it is ſaid, that the greateſt geniuſes were obliged to ſubmit their works to the critical underſtanding of perſons who had formerly been low dependants on ſome man of quality, and who appear to have brought the ſame ſervility of mind to the examination of works of genius. There is ſomething, which, on the principles of incongruity and contraſt, becomes exquiſitely ludicrous, in obſerving the works of ſuch writers as Voltaire, d'Alembert, Marmontel, and Raynal, allowed to be printed, and even commended, by certain perſons, who had never printed any thing themſelves but their names. One of theſe gentlemen ſuppreſſed a work becauſe it contained principles of government, which appeared to him not conformable to the laws of Moſes. Another ſaid to a geometrician, "I cannot permit the publication of your book; you dare to ſay, that between two given points, the ſhorteſt line is the ſtraight line. Do you think me ſuch an idiot as not to per-

ceive your alluſion? If your work appeared, I ſhould make enemies of all thoſe who find, by crooked ways, an eaſier admittance into court, than by a ſtraight line. Conſider their number!" I have heard, that one of theſe cenſors eraſed from a comedy of Beaumarchais, the aſſeveration *ma foi,* and inſtituted in it's place, *morbleu*; becauſe, obſerved the profound critic, religion is leſs offended by this word than by the other. Theſe appear trifling minutiæ; and yet, like a hair in a watch, that utterly deſtroys it's progreſs, theſe little ineptiæ obliged writers to have recourſe to foreign preſſes; compelled a Monteſquieu to write with a concealed ambiguity of phraſe, and Helvetius to ſign a retractation of his principles.

At the revolution, ceaſed, in England, the licences for the preſs; but it's liberty did not commence till 1694, when every reſtraint was taken off, by the firm and deciſive tone of the commons. It was granted, ſays our philoſophic Hume, "to the great diſpleaſure of the King and his Miniſters, who, ſeeing no where, in any government during preſent or paſt ages, any example of ſuch unlimited freedom, doubted much of it's ſalutary effects, and probably thought, that no books or writings would ever ſo much improve the general underſtanding of men, as to render it ſafe to entruſt them with an indulgence to eaſily abuſed."

And the preſent moment verifies the preſcient conjecture of the philoſopher. Such, indeed, is the exiſting licentiouſneſs of our preſs, that ſome, not perhaps the moſt hoſtile to the cauſe of freedom,

dom, would not be averſe to manacle authors once more with an IMPRIMATUR. For it will not be denied, that Eraſmus was a friend to the freedom of the preſs; yet he was ſo ſhocked at the licentiouſneſs of Luther's pen, that there was a time when he conſidered it as neceſſary to reſtrain the liberty of the preſs. He had indeed been miſerably calumniated, and expected future libels. I am glad, however, to obſerve that he afterwards, on a more impartial inveſtigation, confeſſed that ſuch a remedy was much more dangerous than the diſeaſe. To reſtrain the liberty of the preſs, can only be the intereſt of the individual, never that of the public. It may be honeſtly urged, that the worſt abuſe of the preſs is more tolerable than would be ſuch a violation of national liberty; but this is certain, that it is not any more in the power of a deſpotic Miniſter to annihilate this freedom; becauſe if the great inſtructors of mankind could find no other redreſs againſt the capricious tyranny of an Imprimatur, they would fly to foreign preſſes, and it would then happen, that England, which firſt diffuſed a ſpirit of true freedom in Europe, would be neceſſitated to receive it from thoſe very nations on whom ſhe had beſtowed it. The profound Hume has declared, that "THE LIBERTY OF BRITAIN IS GONE FOR EVER when ſuch attempts ſhall ſucceed."

A virtuous monarch, will conſider the freedom of the preſs as the organ of his people's felicity; for by that organ alone can the voice of truth reſound to his throne. He will reſpect the language

of the philoſopher; and he will leave caluminators to the fate of all calumny; a fate ſimilar to thoſe, who having overcharged their arms, with the felleſt intentions, find, that the death they intended for others, only in burſting, annihilates themſelves.

*** The work of Dr. James, keeper of the public library of Oxford, mentioned in this Eſſay, is entitled, "A Treatiſe of the Corruption of Scripture, Councils, and Fathers, by the Church of Rome, for the Maintenance of Popery and Irreligion." London, Quarto, 1612.---He has inſerted in this work a hiſtory of the origin, the arts, and the abuſes of the *Indices* Expurgatorii. He has given a catalogue of 323 of their forbidden books, with notices of thoſe parts which the Inquiſition thought neceſſary to be purged away.

On Reading.

SINCE writing is juſtly denominated an art, I think that reading claims the ſame diſtinction. To adorn ideas with elegance, is an act of the mind, ſuperior to that of receiving them, and is the province of genius; but to receive them with a happy diſcrimination, is a taſk not leſs uſeful, and can only be the effect of a juſt taſte.

Yet it will be found that a juſt taſte is not ſufficient to obtain the proper end of reading. Two perſons of equal taſte riſe from the peruſal of the ſame book with very different notions; the one will not only have the ideas of the author at command, and ſtrongly imbibe his manner, but will have enriched his own mind by a new acceſſion of matter, and find a new train of ſentiment awakened and in action. The other quits his author in a pleaſing diſtraction, but of the pleaſures of reading, nothing remains but a tumultuous ſenſation. He has only delighted himſelf with the brilliant colouring, and the mingled ſhadows of a variety of objects, while the other receives the impreſſion not only of the colours and the ſhades, but the diſtinct grace, and the accurate forms of the objects.

To account for theſe different effects, we muſt have recourſe to a logical diſtinction, which appears to reveal one of the great myſteries in the art of reading. Logicians diſtinguiſh between perceptions and ideas. Perception is that faculty

of the mind which notices the ſimple impreſſion of objects: but when theſe objects exiſt in the mind, and are there treaſured and arranged as materials for reflection, then they are called ideas. A perception is like a tranſient ſun-beam, which juſt ſhews the object, but leaves neither light nor warmth; while an idea is like the fervid beam of noon, which throws a ſettled and powerful light.

Many ingenious readers complain that their memory is defective, and their ſtudies unfruitful. This defect, however, ariſes from their indulging the facile pleaſures of perceptions, in preference to the laborious habit of forming them into ideas. We muſt not deceive ourſelves. Perceptions require only the ſenſibility of taſte, and their pleaſures are continuous, eaſy, and exquiſite. Ideas not only require the ſame power of taſte, but an art of combination, and an exertion of the reaſoning powers, which form no mean operation of the mind. Ideas are therefore labours; and for thoſe who will not undergo the fatigue of labour, it is unjuſt to complain, if they come from the harveſt with ſcarcely a ſheaf in their hands.

The numerous claſs of readers of taſte, who only prefer a book to the odd trick at whiſt, have, therefore, no reaſon to murmur, if that which is only taken up as an amuſement, ſhould terminate like all amuſements, in temporary pleaſure. To be wiſer and better, is rarely the intention of the gay and the frivolous; the complaints of the gay and the frivolous, are nothing but a new manner

of

of diſplaying gaiety and frivolity; they are lamentations full of mirth.

There are ſecrets in the art of reading, which tend to facilitate it's purpoſes, by aſſiſting the memory, and augmenting intellectual opulence. Some, our own ingenuity muſt form, and perhaps every ſtudent, has an artificial manner of recollection, and a peculiar arrangement; as, in ſhort hand, almoſt every writer has a ſyſtem of his own. There are, however, ſome regulations which appear of general utility, and the few, my own obſervations have produced, I ſhall venture to communicate.

It is an obſervation of the elder Pliny, (who, having been a voluminous compiler, muſt have had great experience in the art of reading) that there was no book ſo bad, but which contained ſomething good. It is neceſſary, however, to obſerve, that juſt and obvious as this reading axiom may appear, it requires a commentary to be underſtood. To read every book would be fatal to the intereſt of moſt readers; Men of taſte who read variouſly know that the pains exceed the pleaſures; to Men of curioſity the pleaſures exceed the pains. The reader of erudition who ſearches for facts and avoids opinions, may therefore read every book. He muſt pick his few flowers from rugged rocks, and paſs many days bewildered in wild deſerts. But he who only deſires to gratify a more delicate ſenſation, the reader of taſte, muſt be contented to range in more contracted limits, and to reſtrict himſelf to the paths of cultured pleaſure grounds.

Without this diſtinction in reading, ſtudy becomes a labour painful and interminable; and hence readers of taſte complain that there is no term to reading, and readers of erudition that books contain nothing but phraſes. When the former confine themſelves to works of taſte, their complaints ceaſe, and when the latter keep to books of facts, they fix on the proper aliment for their inſatiable curioſity.

Nor is it always neceſſary, in the purſuits of learning, to read every book entire. Perhaps this taſk has now become an impoſſibility, notwithſtanding thoſe oſtentatious erudits, who, by their infinite and exact quotations, appear to have read and digeſted every thing; readers, artleſs and honeſt, have conceived from ſuch writers, an illuſive idea of the power and extenſiveneſs of the human faculties. Of many books it is ſufficient to ſeiſe the plan, and to examine ſome of their portions. The quackery of the learned, has been often expoſed; and the art of quoting fifty books in a morning, is a taſk neither difficult nor tedious. Of the little ſupplement at the cloſe of a volume, few readers conceive the utility; but ſome of the moſt eminent writers in Europe, have been great adepts in the art of index-reading. An index-reader is, indeed, more let into the ſecrets of an author, than the other who attends him with all the tedious forms of ceremony; as thoſe Courtiers who pay their public devoirs at court, are leſs familiar with the Miniſter, than the few who merely enter the chamber of audience, and who generally

generally ſteal up the back ſtairs. I, for my part, venerate the inventor of indexes; and I know not to whom to yield the preference, either to Hippocrates, who was the firſt great anatomiſer of the human body, or to that unknown labourer in literature, who firſt laid open the nerves and arteries of a book.*

It may be unneceſſary alſo, to read all the works of an author, but only to attach ourſelves to thoſe which have received the approbation of poſterity. By this ſcheme we become acquainted with the fineſt compoſitions in half the time thoſe employ, who, attempting to read every thing, are often little acquainted with, and even ignorant of the moſt intereſting performances. Thus of Machiavel, it may be ſufficient to read his Prince and his Hiſtory of Florence; of Milton nearly all his Poetry, little of his Proſe, and nothing of his Hiſtory; of Fielding's twelve volumes, ſix may be ſufficient; and of Voltaire's ninety, perhaps thirty may ſatisfy. Of Lord Cheſterfield's Letters, the third

* Watts adviſes the peruſal of the *Prefaces* and the *Index* of a Book, as they both give light on its contents.—Gibbons has a new idea in the Art of Reading; he ſays "we ought not to attend to the order of our Books, ſo much as of our Thoughts." The peruſal of a particular Work gives birth perhaps to ideas unconnected with the ſubject it treats; I purſue theſe ideas and quit my propoſed plan of Reading. Thus in the midſt of Homer he read Longinus; a chapter of Longinus lead to an Epiſtle of Pliny; and having finiſhed Longinus, he followed the train of his ideas of the ſublime and beautiful in the Enquiry of Burke, and concluded by comparing the ancient with the modern Longinus.

third volume is the eſſential one, and concentrates the whole ſyſtem. A reader is too often a priſoner attached to the triumphal car of an author of great celebrity, and when he ventures not to judge for himſelf, conceives, while he is reading the indifferent works of great authors, that the langour which he experiences, ariſes from his own defective taſte. But the beſt writers, when they are voluminous, have a great deal of mediocrity; for whenever an author attains to a facility in compoſition, the ſucceſs of his preceding labours, not only ſtimulates him to new performances, but prejudices the public in their favour; and it is often no ſhort period before the public, or the author, are ſenſible of the mediocrity of the performances.

On the other ſide, readers muſt not imagine that all the pleaſures of compoſition depend on the author; for there is ſomething which a reader himſelf muſt bring to the book, that the book may pleaſe. There is a literary appetite which the author can no more impart, than the moſt ſkilful cook can give an appetency to the gueſts. When Cardinal Richelieu ſaid to Godeau, that he did not underſtand his verſes, the honeſt poet replied, that it was not his fault. It would indeed be very unreaſonable, when a painter exhibits his pictures in public, to expect that he ſhould provide ſpectacles for the uſe of the ſhort-ſighted. Every man muſt come prepared as well as he can. Simonides confeſſed himſelf incapable of deceiving ſtupid perſons; and Balzac remarked of the girls of his village,

lage, that they were too ſilly to be duped by a man of wit. Dullneſs is impenetrable; and there are hours when the livelieſt taſte loſes it's ſenſibility. The temporary tone of the mind may be unfavourable to taſte a work properly, and we have had many erroneous criticiſms from great men, which may often be attributed to this circumſtance. The mind communicates it's infirm diſpoſitions to the book, and an author has not only his own defects to account for, but alſo thoſe of his reader. There is ſomething in compoſition, like the game of ſhuttlecock, where, if the reader does not quickly rebound the feathered cork, to the author, the game is deſtroyed, and the whole ſpirit of the work falls extinct.

A frequent impediment in reading, is a diſinclination in the mind to ſettle on the ſubject; agitated by incongruous and diſſimilar ideas, it is with pain that we admit thoſe of the author. But on applying ourſelves, with a gentle violence, to the peruſal of an intereſting work, the mind ſoon aſſimilates the ſubject; the diſinclination is no more, and like Homer's chariot wheels, we kindle as we roll. The ancient Rabbins, adviſed their young ſtudents to apply themſelves to their readings, whether they felt an inclination or not, becauſe, as they proceeded, they would find their diſpoſition reſtored, and their curioſity awakened. Philoſophy can eaſily account for this fact; it is ſo certain, and acts with ſuch power, that even indifferent works are frequently finiſhed, merely to gratify that curioſity which their early pages have

 communicated.

communicated. The ravenous appetite of Johnſon for reading, is expreſſed in a ſtrong metaphor, by Mrs. Knowles, who ſaid, " he knows how to read better than any one; he gets at the ſubſtance of a book directly; he tears out the heart of it."

We ſhould heſitate to pronounce on a work of ſome merit, on the firſt peruſal, for that is rarely attended by a proper reliſh. It is with reading as with wine; for connoiſſeurs have obſerved, that the firſt glaſs is inſufficient to decide on it's quality; it is neceſſary to imbue the palate, to give it that racineſs of reliſh, which communicates every latent quality, and enables us to judge as keenly as the two uncles of Sancho.

There are ſome mechanical aids in reading, which may prove of great utility, and form a kind of rejuveneſcence of our early ſtudies. Montaigne placed at the end of a book which he intended not to reperuſe, the time he had read it, with a conciſe deciſion on it's merits; that, ſays he, it may thus repreſent to me, the air and general idea I had conceived of the author, in reading the work. He has obliged his admirers with giving ſeveral of theſe annotations. Of Young the poet, it is noticed, that whenever he came to a ſtriking paſſage, he folded the leaf; and that at his death, books have been found in his library, which had long reſiſted the power of cloſing. A mode more eaſy than uſeful; for after a length of time, they muſt be again read to know why they were folded. This difficulty is obviated by thoſe, who note in a blank leaf, the pages to be referred to, with a word of criticiſm.

ticiſm. Nor let us conſider theſe minute directions as unworthy the moſt enlarged minds; by theſe petty exertions at the moſt diſtant periods, may learning obtain it's authorities, and fancy combine it's ideas. Seneca, in ſending ſome volumes to his friend Lucilius, accompanies them with notes of particular paſſages that, he obſerves, you who only aim at the uſeful, may be ſpared the trouble of examining them entire. I have ſeen books noted by Voltaire with a word of cenſure or approbation on the page itſelf, which was his uſual practice; and theſe volumes are precious to every man of taſte. Formey complained that the books he lent Voltaire were returned always diſfigured by his remarks; but he was a true German writer of the old claſs.

A profeſſional ſtudent ſhould divide his readings into an *uniform* reading which is uſeful, and into a *diverſified* reading which is pleaſant. Guy Patin, an eminent phyſician and man of letters, had a juſt notion of this manner; and I ſhall quote his words. He ſays, "I daily read Hippocrates, Galen, Fernel, and other illuſtrious maſters of my profeſſion; this I call my profitable readings. I frequently read Ovid, Juvenal, Horace, Seneca, Tacitus, and others, and theſe are my recreations." We muſt obſerve theſe diſtinctions, for it frequently happens that a lawyer or a phyſician, with great induſtry and love of ſtudy, by giving too much into his diverſified readings, may utterly neglect what ſhould be his uniform ſtudies.

An

An author is often cruelly mortified to find his work repoſing on a harpſichord or a table, with it's virgin pages. It was among the mortifications of the elegant Mickle, that the lord to whom he had dedicated his verſion of the Luſiad, had long the epic in his poſſeſſion, in the ſtate he had received it! How often alſo are authors mortified to perceive, that generally the firſt volume of their work is ever fouler than it's brother! It is, therefore, an advantage to compoſe in ſingle volumes; for then they flatter themſelves, a ſecond would be acceptable; but moſt books are more read for curioſity, than for pleaſure; and are often looked into, but rarely reſumed. Authors are vain, but readers are capricious.

Readers may be elaſſed into an infinite number of diviſions; but an author is a ſolitary being, who, for the ſame reaſon he pleaſes one, muſt conſequently diſpleaſe another. To have too exalted a genius, is more prejudicial for his celebrity, than to have a moderate one; for we ſhall find that the moſt popular works, are not of the higheſt value, but of the greateſt uſefulneſs. I could mention ſome eſteemed writers, whoſe works have attained to a great number of editions, but whoſe minds were never yet inflamed by an accidental fervour of original genius. They inſtruct thoſe who require inſtruction, and they pleaſe thoſe, who are yet ſufficiently ignorant to diſcover a novelty in their ſtrictures; in a word they form taſte, rather than impart genius. A Carlo Marat, is a Raphael to thoſe who have not ſtudied a Raphael. They may apply

apply to themſelves the ſame obſervation Lucilius, the ſatiriſt, has made, that he did not write for Perſius, for Scipio, and for Rutilius, perſons eminent for their ſcience, but for the Tarentines, the Conſentines, and the Sicilians. Montaigne has complained that he found his readers too learned, or too ignorant, and that he could only pleaſe a middle claſs, who have juſt learning enough to comprehend him. Congreve ſays, "there is in true beauty, ſomething which vulgar ſouls cannot admire." Balzac complains bitterly of Readers---a period, he cries, ſhall have coſt us the labour of a day; we ſhall have diſtilled into an Eſſay the eſſence of our mind; it may be a finiſhed piece of art; and they think they are indulgent when they pronounce it to contain ſome pretty things, and that the ſtyle is not bad!---There is ſomething in exquiſite compoſition which ordinary readers can never underſtand.

Some will only read old books, as if there were no valuable truths to be diſcovered in modern publications, while others will only read new books, as if ſome valuable truths are not among the old. Some will not read a book, becauſe they are acquainted with the author; by which the reader may be more injured than the author; others not only read the book, but would alſo read the man; by which the moſt ingenious author may be injured by the moſt impertinent reader.

An Author would write with refinement and delicacy, the reader has neither; if the author does not ſucceed he may be an intelligible, but ſtill an indifferent

indifferent writer; if he ſucceeds that reader will reject him as an obſcure writer, yet the author will then be a highly-finiſhed writer. Some readers complain of the obſcurity of an author, and often they are right; but there are ſome eyes to which almoſt every thing appears miſty; for a picture may be hung in it's proper light, though for ſome it may be raiſed too high. One ought not to ſee every thing diſtinctly, but only certain parts; the imagination properly ſupplies the intermediate connections. Hence are derived what ſome conſider to be the obſcurities of genius, which indeed are only the *obvious parts* which it wiſhes to *conceal.*

On Poetical Expression.

ONE of the grand diſtinctions of poetry conſiſts in a peculiarity of phraſe, and novelty of expreſſion; for no mechanical arrangements, not even ſentiment or imagery, (for proſe can retain all theſe qualities) can form the eſſential diſtinction between verſe and proſe. The genuine diction of poetry is totally diſtinct from proſaic compoſition, and the charm ariſes from it's being removed from familiar language. From this eſtabliſhed and acknowledged principle may be deduced the following facts:

Hence may be accounted the extreme delight found in the ancient claſſics, which, with ſome, has ariſen to ſuch an extravagance. A judicious critic will allow, that a paſſage in Pope, may rival one in Virgil; and it might happen, that the modern excelled the ancient parallel. But the pleaſure may not be equal in the modern as in the ancient; nor is this the mere effect of an artificial ſenſation acquired at the univerſity, but on the contrary it is a natural emotion. The ancient enjoys the peculiar felicity of employing a diction, which to us muſt be immaculate; a magnificence of ſound, and a novelty of combination; we are offended by no feebleneſs of terms, and no familiarity of expreſſion. A turn of diction, which might have been but common, and in the poſſeſſion of an ordinary verſifier in the days of Virgil, may to us

us be very graceful; and thus ideas which would excite no attention in a modern, may charm in an ancient. Hence too, modern poets, who write Engliſh verſe, without genius or taſte, have often compoſed in Latin with ſome powers. We no doubt diſcover a hundred beauties in Horace and Virgil, which could not have been ſuch to their contemporaries, becauſe the language was not ſufficiently remote from them. I ſhall give two very poetical expreſſions in Virgil, which I now recollect, and he has many ſimilar ones. Theſe felicitous expreſſions, full of the true ſpirit of poetry, were probably no novelties when he wrote them. The poet ſays, "*Dum trepidant* ALÆ" and "SONIPES," where, in the firſt, *wings* are underſtood for *birds*, and in the ſecond, *ſounding-feet* for *horſes*. The effect for the cauſe. Milton is fond of Metonomy; the Efficient for the Effect. He has

"The ſounding alchemy"
P. L. b. ii. *v.* 516.

The general for the particular:

"So ſpake the griſly terror."
b. ii. *v.* 704.

All this is highly poetical expreſſion. Dryden in verſifying the celebrated ſimile of Virgil's Nightingale, has happily called the young, "the unfeathered innocence:" how ſuperior to "the young birds!"

Virgil

Virgil has alſo, in his Georgics, an expreſſion, ſo truly inimitable, that our language appears not to afford a correſpondent delicacy. When the poet deſcribes Eurydice, at the moment before ſhe is wounded by the ſnake concealed in the graſs, as if animated by a preſcient fervour, he exclaims—"*moritura puella.*" The reader of taſte feels an emotion of ſurpriſe and curioſity. Tranſlate this happy word literally into proſe, and the grace muſt be as fugitive as Eurydice herſelf, "the maid about to die." The charm ariſes, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, from the conciſe amplitude of idea the ſingle word conveys. All our tranſlators have failed in catching the evaneſcent beauty:

"The dying bride."	*Dryden.*
"She doomed to death."	*Trapp.*
"The fated maid."	*Warton.*

In none of theſe is a ſimilar emotion raiſed in the mind of the reader, which he receives from the "Moritura." Dryden's, indeed, is ſingularly exceptionable, and Warton's the happieſt; yet, "fated" is a general idea, and loſes that delicate ſhade of appropriation, of the "about to die."

In an inferior degree, we may extend our principle to modern languages; for, to me, it has often appeared, that a paſſage from Taſſo, has given to an Engliſh reader a pleaſure which a native cannot experience; the pleaſure ariſing from a language whoſe graces have not become familiar by ordinary recurrence.

I conceive

I conceive that the effect of the ſame principle may be traced in our own earlier writers. One of their peculiar charms is their ancient ſtyle; and certain phraſes, which are generally underſtood, delight, like a painting which is juſt embrowned and mellowed by the hand of time. If we contraſt a fine paſſage in Shakeſpeare, with a rival one in a modern poet, allowing them an equal force, we ſhould not heſitate to give the preference to the elder bard. The lively pleaſure with which ſome men of taſte read Chaucer, may be aſcribed to their ſenſibility of a language, which diſplays many graces, inveſted with that novelty of poetical expreſſion, which would ceaſe to ſtrike were they familiar. The venerable dignity of the Scriptures is greatly derived from their ancient ſtyle, and their ſimplicity, delightful in the old Engliſh, would evaporate, transfuſed into modern language.

Hence we may deduce a curious fact; that one of the moſt difficult branches in modern poetry, or in the poetical art, in all ages of refinement, is, the formation of a new ſtyle, or poetical diction. This demands not only a ſuperior genius, but a ſuſpicion may ariſe that our language in this reſpect is nearly exhauſted. And this will appear, if we examine the fineſt compoſitions publiſhed within the laſt thirty years; where one eminent defect will often be prevalent; that the general caſt of the language has little variations; expreſſions are interwoven, which the poet nicely picked out of the performanees of his predeceſſors, to embroider his own; and though, ſometimes, a new combination of

of ideas, or a felicity of ſubject, render a poem intereſting, yet the poetical treaſury of diction receives but few acceſſions.

That this has been an effect felt by poets, who are not apt to inveſtigate cauſes, appears by the following obſervations and facts:

Milton, whoſe notions of poetry were of the moſt exalted nature, when he propoſed compoſing an epic, perceived the neceſſity of conſtructing a new diction, or, as himſelf expreſſes it,

"To build the lofty rime."

In his ſmaller productions he was ſatisfied to employ the language of his contemporaries, becauſe in a ſhort compoſition he might form new combinations of ſtyle, without purſuing any particular ſyſtem. What therefore, has this great poet attempted? An introduction of all the happieſt idioms of every language with which his extenſive learning was acquainted. Hebraiſms and Greciſms, Latiniſms and Italianiſms, poured themſelves to his copious mind; and what Johnſon has termed "the pedantry of his ſtyle," true taſte will, perhaps, acknowledge as an attempt to ſeize on thoſe felicitous expreſſions which more nicely reveal our ſenſations. Dryden adorned his language alſo with many Latiniſms; and Pope is acknowledged to have formed a diction, which in his day had all the attractions of novelty. Of all our poets, Gray had the livelieſt ſenſibility for this beauty, which he has expreſſed by "words that burn." A poet of his ability who ſtudied ſo much,

and

and produced ſo little, ſeems to ſhew that he could not ſatisfy his own delicacy of taſte, in the creation of a new poetical diction; and this, I think, appears by thoſe few exquiſite performances he has left, for almoſt every expreſſion in the poetry of Gray appears to have been imitated from his predeceſſors. He juſtly obſerves that "the language of the age is never the language of poetry." What he has given evinces his aim; and we may conclude that it is one of the grand characteriſtics of modern poetry, and one of the greateſt obſtacles in that pleaſing art.

Another obſervation may confirm this principle. Whenever, in the progreſs of refinement, the poetical language becomes thus difficult, it is obſervable that true genius, often weary with imitatively echoing the eſtabliſhed diction, at once falls back into the manner of the earlier poets. Some expreſſions of our elder writers have a marvellous effect in modern verſe. The poet Rouſſeau has in many of his compoſitions eſſayed to ſeize on the naiveté of Marot, by copying his ſtyle, but his ſtrained affectation produces a diſagreeable effect. Churchill rejected an artificial diction, and too often verſifies like Oldham; for an editor of this poet's works has contraſted paſſages from the modern ſatiriſt, which equal the diſcordance of Oldham's verſe. When Churchill introduces a poetical expreſſion from our elder poets, it has often a very pleaſing effect. Mr. Cooper, and his imitators, can only be conſidered as having aſſumed the diction and the manner of our old poets; a criti-

cal feeling perceives, in their blank verſe, the tones of Shakeſpeare.

It has been conſidered as a poetical beauty to aggrandiſe the minute by the pomp of expreſſion. When objects, or circumſtances, by their exility or meanneſs, would occaſion no agreeable ſenſation, ſome have thought it an evidence of higher art, to dignify them by grandeur of ſtyle; in a word, as I heard a man of genius ſay of a painter, "he knew to give dignity to a dunghill." But this has often been carried to exceſs, by a faſtidious refinement. Boileau has been applauded (becauſe he firſt applauded himſelf, which is a certain way of ſecuring the approbation of many) for having raiſed into poetical language, the ſimple idea of his wearing a wig at the age of fifty-eight. The lines are thus:

"Mais aujourdhui, qu'enfin la vielleſſe eſt venue,
Sous mes faux cheveux blonds deja toute chenue,
A jetté ſur ma tête, avec ſes doigts peſans,
Onze luſtres complets, ſurchargés de trois ans."

To me there appears a puerility in theſe celebrated lines; the deſcription is exact, and the expreſſion beautiful; but does not the poet debaſe his art? When the reader recollects the *wig*, muſt he not ſmile at this mock ſublime? I will give an inſtance where, on the contrary, the idea is great, and the expreſſion mean. Pope has been parodied and ridiculed for the following lines on Lord Mansfield:

"Grac'd as thou art, with all the pow'r of words,
So known, ſo honour'd at *the Houſe of Lords*."

The

The pathos is here in the expreſſion, not in the idea; for if we employ here the word *Senate*, there will be nothing ridiculous; the familiarity of the expreſſion is the only cauſe of this unfortunate paſſage. When words are not familiar they take away from the offence which ſome ideas may give, in common terms. Homer has been ridiculed by certain critics, for having ſo minutely deſcribed the dog Argus, lying on a dunghill, nearly devoured by vermin.---The annotator then obſerves, "It is certain that the *vermin* which Homer mentions, would debaſe our poetry; but in the Greek, that very *word* is *noble* and *ſonorous*, Κυνοραϊρέων." ---Here then is a word which can give dignity to a circumſtance very offenſive in itſelf; but we cannot at preſent, I think, decide whether this word, which appears to us ſo noble and ſonorous, affected an ancient Greek in the ſame manner. All that appears certain, is, that the Κυνοραϊρέων of Homer, is a noble and ſonorous term to our ear, and abates from the familiarity of expreſſion.

As another proof to ſhew the effect of expreſſions that are not familiar, I ſhall quote Kaimes, who has a curious obſervation, which ſeems to relate to this ſubject, though by him applied to a different purpoſe. He writes, "A ſea-proſpect is charming, but we ſoon tire of an unbounded proſpect. It would not give ſatisfaction to ſay, that it is too extenſive; for why ſhould not a proſpect be reliſhed, however extenſive?" But employ *a foreign term*, and ſay that it is *trop vaſte*, we enquire no farther; *a term that is not familiar, makes an*

an impreſſion, and captivates weak reaſon. This obſervation accounts for a mode of writing formerly in common uſe, that of ſtuffing our language with Latin words and phraſes.

To proſaic compoſition we may alſo extend our principle. Purity of language is not a characteriſtic of ſtyle, in an age of refinement.* The great writers will ſolicitouſly domiciliate the moſt elegant foreign idioms, and hence the Latiniſms of Johnſon, and the Gallicisms of Gibbon. The more exquiſite our taſte, the more deſirous are we of expreſſing it's exquiſiteneſs; no writer complains of paucity of expreſſion in the firſt progreſs of taſte; for it is long before we are aware of the difficulty of giving the delicacies of conception, and communicating the preciſe quantity of our feelings. A refined writer is willing to loſe ſomething of idiomatic language, to gain ſomething of expreſſive language. Some of our fineſt idioms become common; and a writer then attempts to give an equivalent in ſenſe, that may not offend by it's commonneſs; and this attempt, perhaps, may ariſe into affectation. The more poliſhed a language becomes, certain ſignificant expreſſions become obſolete;

* Gibbons has obſerved, (this Eſſay was publiſhed before his Memoirs,) vol. ii, p. 77.—"In a polite age, in which a language is thoroughly cultivated, every writer who is a man of education, of letters, and of taſte, ſpeaks nearly the ſame language; and very often *genius* and *eloquence*, inſtead of being companions to *purity* are enemies to it, by diverting the attention to nobler aims. Bouhours is much purer than either Corneille or Bayle."—This obſervation is very important; the truly fine writers will *now* not write the pureſt Engliſh.

ſolete; a complaint made by ſome writers who were more ſolicitous of forcible, than of elegant expreſſion. We are not to be cenſured too ſeverely for an occaſional adoption of a foreign turn of phraſe, though this permiſſion may degenerate into licentiouſneſs with unſkilful writers.

From theſe obſervations on POETICAL EXPRESSION, we may deduce that the diction of poetry is an unſurmountable difficulty. It is a misfortune attending the progreſs of Art. It is our opulence that produces this poverty; for we may ſay with the ancient Romans, alluding to their numerous conqueſts, "we periſh, becauſe of our abundance."

On habituating ourselves to an individual Pursuit.

TWO things in human life are at continual variance; and if we cannot escape from the one, we must be separated from the other; ennui and pleasure. Ennui is an afflicting sensation, if we may thus express it, from a want of sensation; and pleasure is more pleasure according to the quantity of sensation. Let us invent a scheme, by which at once we repel ennui, and acquire and augment pleasure. Sensation is received according to the capability of our organs; our organs may be almost incredibly improved by practice;* intense devotion to an object, must therefore present means of deriving more numerous and keener pleasures from that object.

Hence the poet, long employed on a poem, has received a quantity of pleasure, which no reader can ever feel; and hence one reader receives a quantity of pleasure unfelt by another. In the progress of any particular pursuit, there are a hundred delicious sensations, which are too intellectual, to be embodied into language. Every artist knows what uncommon combinations his meditations produce; and though some too imperfect, or too

* As in the instances of the blind who have a finer tact, and the jeweller who has a finer sight, than other men, who are not so much interested in refining their vision and their feeling.

too ſubtile, reſiſt his powers of diſplaying them to the world, yet between the thought that firſt gave riſe to his deſign, and each one which appears in it, there are innumerable intermediate evaneſcencies of ſenſation (ſo to expreſs myſelf) which no man felt but himſelf. Theſe pleaſures, are in number, according to the intenſeneſs of his faculties, and the quantity of his labour.

Although the above remark alludes to works of art, I would not confine it to theſe purſuits only; for any particular purſuit, from the manufacturing of pins, to the conſtruction of philoſophical ſyſtems, appears ſuſceptible of ſimilar pleaſures. We ſhall ſee that every individual can exert that quantity of mind neceſſary to his wants, and adapted to his ſituation; and that the quality of pleaſure is nothing in the preſent queſtion. For I think that we are miſtaken concerning the gradations of human felicity. It does at firſt appear, that an aſtronomer rapt in abſtraction, while he gazes on a ſtar, muſt feel a more exquiſite delight than a farmer who is conducting his team; or a poet muſt experience a higher gratification in modulating verſes, than a trader in arranging ſums. To this we may reply, that the happineſs of the ploughman and the trader, may be as ſatisfactory as that of the aſtronomer and the poet. Our mind can only be converſant with thoſe ſenſations which ſurround us, and poſſeſſing the ſkill of managing them, we can form an artificial felicity; it is certain, that what the ſoul does not feel, no more affects it, than what the eye does not ſee. It is thus that the mean trader, habituated to low purſuits,

purſuits, can never be unhappy, becauſe he is not the general of an army; for this idea of felicity he has never received. The philoſopher who gives his entire years to the elevated purſuits of mind, is never unhappy becauſe he is not in poſſeſſion of an Indian opulence, for the idea of accumulating this exotic ſplendour has never entered the range of his deſires. Nature, an impartial mother, renders felicity as perfect in the ſchool-boy who ſcourges his top, as in the aſtronomer who regulates his ſtar. The thing contained can only be equal to the container; a full glaſs is as full as a full bottle; and a human ſoul may be as much ſatisfied, in the loweſt of human beings, as in the higheſt.

In this devotion to a particular object, what philoſophers call the ASSOCIATING IDEA, exiſts in all it's activity and energy; and it may be rendered productive of the ſenſations we deſire; for, when attached to one particular purſuit, this idea will generally point and conduct our thoughts to it. The aſſociating power is a ſovereign ſeated on his throne, while all our other ideas bend towards it, and obey it's mandates. Hence the following perſons experience their completeſt happineſs: A ſtudent in the midſt of his books; an artiſt among his productions; a farmer amidſt his lands; a merchant in his trade; a horſeman in his menagerie; a captain in his ſhip, &c. Theſe are all perſons who reſpectively enjoy more real felicity at thoſe hours than in any other portion of their lives.

Many peculiar advantages attend the cultivation of one maſter paſſion, or occupation. In

ſuperior minds it is a ſovereign that exiles others, and in inferior minds it enfeebles pernicious propenſities. It may render us uſeful to our fellow citizens, and, what is of great conſequence, it imparts the moſt perfect independence to the individual. The more alſo the ſovereign paſſion is compoſed of intellectual gratifications, the more exalted and perfect is it's independence. It is obſerved, by a great mathematician, that a geometrician might not be unhappy in a deſert.

We might therefore recommend the ſame unity in life, which gives ſuch a value when found in a picture or a poem. This unity of deſign, with a centripetal force, draws all the rays of our exiſtence, and the more forcibly it draws, the more perfect is human felicity. But if, regardleſs of this, we yield ourſelves to the diſtracting variety of oppoſite purſuits with an equal paſſion, our ſoul is placed amidſt a continual ſhock of ideas, and happineſs is loſt by miſtakes. How often, when accident has turned the mind firmly to one object, has it been diſcovered that it's occupation is another name for happineſs; for this occupation is a mean of eſcaping from incongruous ſenſations. It ſecures us from the dreadful and dark vacuity of ſoul, as well as from the terrible whirlwind of ideas; reaſon itſelf is a paſſion, but a paſſion full of ſerenity.

It is obſervable of thoſe, who have devoted themſelves to an individual object, that it's importance is incredibly enlarged to their ſenſations. Intenſe attention magnifies like a microſcope: but it

it is poſſible to apologize for their apparent extravagance from the conſideration, that they really obſerve excellencies not perceived by others of inferior application. I confeſs this paſſion has been carried to a curious violence of affection; literary hiſtory affords numerous inſtances. I ſhall juſt obſerve, that in reading Dr. Burney's Muſical Travels, it would ſeem that muſic was the prime object of human life; that Richardſon the painter, in his Treatiſe on his beloved Art, cloſes all by affirming, that "*Raphael* is not only *equal*, but *ſuperior* to a *Virgil*, or a *Livy*, or a *Thucydides*, or a *Homer!*" And he proceeds, by acquainting the world, how painting can reform our manners, increaſe our opulence, honour, and power.* Denina, in his Revolutions of Literature, tells us, that to excel in hiſtorical compoſition requires more ability than is exerciſed by the excelling maſters of any other art; becauſe it requires not only the ſame erudition, genius, imagination, taſte, &c. neceſſary for a poet, a painter, or a philoſopher, but the hiſtorian muſt alſo have ſome peculiar qualifications. I think it was after this publication he became an hiſtorian.† Helvetius, an enthuſiaſt

* Our lively enthuſiaſt ſays, elſewhere, "Painting is the utmoſt limit of human power, in the communication of ideas. Hiſtory begins, poetry raiſes higher, ſculpture goes yet farther; but painting compleats and perfects."

† What would this writer have ſaid, if he had heard, one of the literary paradoxes of the preſent day, that no extraordinary abilities are required to form a good hiſtorian?

enthuſiaſt in the fine arts and polite literature, has compoſed a Poem on Happineſs; and imagines that it conſiſts in an excluſive love of the cultivation of letters and the arts. All this, perhaps, may ſhew that the more intenſely we attach ourſelves to an individual object, our ſenſations are more numerous, and more fervidly alive than thoſe who break the force of their feelings in attempting to ſtrike on a variety of objects; and if this is true, we may conclude that it is one great ſource of human happineſs.

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torian? Johnſon ſaid, "great abilities are not requiſite in an hiſtorian; for in hiſtorical compoſition all the greateſt powers of the human mind are quieſcent." See farther in Boſwell, vol. I. p. 390.

On Literary Genius.

WHEN the philoſophy of an age is rude, whatever excellence is produced, is immediately aſcribed to an occult power; when men, after a lapſe of ages, become minuter enquirers, and calmer reaſoners, it is diſcovered how much Art has entered into every great compoſition; and at length, among artiſts themſelves, it becomes a dubious point, whether *art* is not ſufficient to produce *ſimilar effects* to *genius*; or, in other words, whether certain combinations of art, form not genius itſelf.

We ſtill have a few writers who exult in ſome myſtical power in their faculties: who hint at the ſolicitude of nature at their birth, and to employ the language of Milton, derived from the ſuperſtitious credulity of his age, who diſſert with fluency on

"The Stellar Virtue."

which Boileau has made the firſt poſition in the *art* of poetry. Frail females formerly denounced their ſtars as the cauſe of their incontinence; and we have idlers who apologize for their defects from no lower an influence; a reſolute love of virtue would have preſerved the female chaſte, and a reſolute love of labour would have rendered the idler active.

While ſome have rejected this occult influence of the ſtars, others enjoy equal extravagancies;

genius has been regulated by the degree of longitude and latitude; it has been derived from the ſubtilty of the blood, and even from the refinements of cookery; others ſuppoſe that a writer of imagination is incapable of learned reſearch, and that for every particular ſtudy a peculiar conſtruction of the intellectual powers becomes neceſſary; that the ſolidity of judgment impedes the vigour of fancy, and that the poet cannot inveſtigate nature with the eye of philoſophic ſcience.*

With chilling fancies like theſe, have the minds of the moſt adventurous geniuſes been rendered puſillanimous; and grand deſigns, conceived with ardent felicity, have ſuddenly expired, becauſe their affrighted parents refuſed to foſter them with the vitality of induſtry. In an accompliſhed genius,

* Genius has been divided, and ſubdivided. There is a genius for oratory, conſiſting of the art of moving the paſſions, united with the art of applying our arguments; a genius for phyſics and geometry, when occupied in calculating the motions and action of the globes of the univerſe, and the whole phenomena of nature; a genius for painting and ſculpture, when the pencil and chiſſel trace on the marble or canvaſs the actions or the features of a hero; and the genius for poetry is ſaid to conſiſt in the power which nature imparts by phyſical ſenſibility, and a happy conformation of the organs to certain perſons, in conceiving boldly, and delivering eaſily; in painting what is ſtrongly felt, and it is, in a word, what Horace calls *Splendida bilis*, which we are further informed is *a kind of central fire*, which elevates the mind, warms the imagination, which makes one think with force, and deſcribe with livelineſs. See on this ſubject the *Principes pour la Lecture des Poetes* by the Abbé Mallet.

But

nius, Horace, one of the moſt philoſophical poets, allows that art muſt be united with nature; but we probably attach different ideas to this power of nature, than the philoſophy of the age of Horace allowed him to aequire. Since his time, and even in the preſent day, ſome regard genius as nothing ſhort of inſpiration, and employ, in the ſober diſquiſitions of philoſophy, the fanciful expreſſions of poetry. We are told, that to attain to a ſuperiority in any art, we muſt be *born* with a certain *ſuſceptibility*, or *aptitude*; we muſt be *born* a poet, or a painter; or, as one painter complimented another, by ſaying, that he was a painter in his mother's womb. A happy genius depends on the influence of the ſtars ſay the Aſtrologers---on the organs of the body aſſert the Naturaliſts---on the favour of Heaven exclaim the Divines.---Every one ſeems

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But what is gained by all theſe myſtical diſtinctions, this *ſplendida bilis* and *central fire?* Are we always to take words for things? Do ſuch critics ſay any thing more, than that genius, is genius? I lament that even Pope extends this ſyſtem to criticiſm; for he ſays of poets and critics:

" Both muſt alike from *heaven* derive their light;
Theſe *born to judge*, as well as thoſe to *write*."

Which is certainly contrary to experience; *taſte*, the characteriſtic of criticiſm, is now acknowledged to be obtainable by a conſtant attachment to the moſt finiſhed performances of art. And when he adds:

" Let ſuch teach others who themſelves excel;
And cenſure freely who have written well."

The maxim is not leſs erroneous; for the beſt poets are not always the ſureſt critics, as in the caſe of Goldſmith and others; and moſt of the beſt critics have not been poets.

ſeems willing to do honour to his own profeſſion. But ſuch myſtic reveries indulged by the artiſt, only ſhew that he is intereſted in exciting the wonder of the ignorant; this is not leſs injurious to art, than viſionary fanaticiſm to religion.

Dryden traces the whole hiſtory of genius in a couplet:

> " What in nature's dawn the child *admired*,
> The youth *endeavoured* and the man ACQUIRED."

Yet is it not always *neceſſary* that this admiration ſhould be felt in childhood, or in youth, ſince accidental cauſes have frequently directed the purſuits of genius.* Careſſes and coercion alſo, have *made* many a youth a bright genius; patronage and poverty have *ſtimulated* men to become illuſtrious artiſts. Metaſtaſio affirmed that *neceſſity* frequently augmented our powers, and forced us to perform in a better manner, though with more expedition than the operations of our choice and leiſure. Two of his beſt Operas were produced in a ſhort time, being commanded by a particular occaſion. Bernocchi's voice was never *naturally* good, (ſays Dr. Burney) and at firſt was ſo much diſliked, that he was peremptorily told by his friends to quit the

* Some inſtances are collected in Curioſities of Literature, fourth edition, vol. 1. I add an obſervation of Johnſon. " To a particular ſpecies of excellence men are directed, not by an aſcendant planet, or predominating humour, but by the firſt book which they read; ſome early converſation which they heard; or ſome accident which excited ardour and emulation."

the profeffion; but his ſituation as a Caſtrato had left him without ſtrength or ſpirits for any other. By ſevere ſtudy he *acquired* a ſtyle and manner which became the ſtandard of perfection in that art. Nature had not deſigned Matherbe for a Poet, but he overcame Nature in his ſtruggles, obſerves Boileau.

In the hiſtory of genius we are preſented with wider proſpects, by the late attentions beſtowed on the ſtudies of biography. In tracing the hiſtory of philoſophers and poets, we have traced the genius of philoſophy and poetry; we have obſerved that certain events produced certain conſequences, and why men, with an equal aptitude for genius, have not always become men of genius. Illuſtrious characters are rare, owing to the rarity of thoſe human coincidencies which produce illuſtrious characters. Man is ſo influenced by moral cauſes, that the perfection of his genius is ever proportioned to their effects. When men of letters reflected on the manner of their own attainments, and on thoſe events of literary hiſtory which related to others, they diſcovered that the faculties of the mind are not *gifts* from nature, but effects from human cauſes, or *acquiſitions* of art.

Every man of common organiſation has the power of becoming a man of genius, if to this be added a ſolitary devotion to art, and a vehement paſſion for glory. It is the capacity of long attention, which, in the preſent day, muſt make one man ſuperior to another. Phyſical ſenſibility may vary, and defective organs cannot be ſupplied by any artificial

tificial mode. But in general, Nature has more impartiality than ſome of her children will allow; and it would be very difficult to find men, who have been ſo cruelly neglected by our common mother, as not to be endowed with ſufficient powers to excel in ſome particular department, when, by examining their mental ſtores, they have the art of diſcovering the kind of ſtudy for which they are beſt adapted, and when, having made this important diſcovery, moral and phyſical cauſes are not inimical to their progreſs. An idiot is more rare than a man of genius.

The man of genius ſhould ever examine his phyſical and moral ſtate; for to ameliorate their advantages, and ſupply their deficiencies, are of the greateſt conſequence to his ſucceſs. A defect in phyſical ſenſibility, will diſorder ſome portion of genius; and the purblind eye of Johnſon, which denied him the taſte for picturesque beauty, occaſioned much erroneous criticiſm, without, however, diminiſhing his *acquired* faculties on topics where this ſenſibility was not requiſite. Defects in the moral ſtate are innumerable; they contract, or they enfeeble, or they annihilate genius. Shenſtone, who devoted his days to poetry, equally with Pope, could never reach his powers. But was his life not a ſeries of diſcontent and liſtleſſneſs? Without the vigour of hope, and without the exhilaration of enjoyment? Pope, on the contrary, was fortunate throughout life. In other circumſtances Dryden might have proved ſuperior to Pope, and Otway had equalled Shakeſpeare. Helvetius

vetius obſerves that it is not ſufficient to poſſeſs genius to obtain it's title. One diſcovers, another improves, a third accompliſhes; and this laſt is ſaluted as the genius, although he has really not advanced the art *in a greater proportion* than his leſs fortunate predeceſſors. The elder Pliny obſerves, it is certain that *the time* in which a man lives is not an indifferent circumſtance for his abilities.

All that the fineſt organiſation can impart in the preſent day, will never form one work of genius. The mere natural produce of the moſt fertile individual will now be only a pitiable indigence; for the opulence of the mind can now only be formed by ſtoring it with acquired knowledge; and the moſt valuable productions will be thoſe in which the induſtry of the mind has been moſt vigilantly exerciſed. Natural abilities produce nothing but the haws and berries of our ancient Britons; the richneſs of our orchards has been borrowed from all the varieties of climate. Pertinacity of meditation, becomes a commerce of the mind; it aſſembles and combines the ideas of others, but the ſenſations it experiences are it's own. We *learn* to think, by being converſant with the thoughts of others; but this is denied, ſince it is aſſerted that the thoughts of others encumber our own. He, however, who is not familiariſed with the fineſt thoughts of the fineſt writers, will one day be mortified to obſerve, that his beſt thoughts are their indifferent ones. Nature reſpects a certain progreſſion; ſhe expands by a gradual

gradual amplification; ſhe makes no leaps. But he who fondly dotes on what he terms his *natural powers*, audaciouſly imagines, that alone he can arrive at that point of knowledge, attained by the fraternal labours of the moſt eminent geniuſes. To think with thinking men, is to run with agile racers. But as this is not always attended to, we abound with writers who are far removed from an excellence they *could* have *acquired*; as he who, accuſtomed to run in a ſolitary courſe, felicitated himſelf as being one of the firſt racers, but received the public deriſion when he preſented himſelf at the Olympic games.

In meditating on the characters, the modes of life, the ſlow formation, and the painful vigilance of ſome great writers, I have been of opinion, that their conſpicuous labours were the gradual acquiſitions of *art*. Of theſe writers many have acknowledged that they could produce nothing valuable till a flame, caught by contact, had lighted up their minds; they reſemble certain trees, which, though they could produce no valuable fruit of themſelves, are excellent for grafting on. The minds of ſuch writers are like a globe of glaſs, which, when rapidly revolved, and the hand applied to it's ſurface, will grow warm, emit light, and attract bodies. Among this claſs of writers we might place Boileau and Racine; Pope and Gray; Akenſide and Armſtrong; Monteſquieu and Johnſon. When Boileau aſked Chapelle, a facile, natural writer, for an opinion of his poetry, Chapelle made this ſarcaſtic compariſon:—You are a great

great ox, who, labouring ſlowly and painfully, make a deep furrow.

There are certain writers, ſuch as Adam Smith, Locke, and Bayle, whoſe works require analytical and minute inveſtigations. This calmneſs of the intellect ariſes from conſtitutional cauſes; and ſo far it may be ſaid, that a man is *born* to be a philoſopher or a poet. The warmth and temperature of the conſtitution may influence his modes of life, and the arrangement of his ideas.

The French appear to have formed a diſtinction between great writers. They call Corneille *un homme de Genie*, and Racine *un homme d'Eſprit*. The latter kind of writers are the more agreeable; for though they never ſurpaſs the former, yet they are more equable, and can more happily adapt themſelves to a variety of topics. Men of genius have ſtronger but more confined faculties.*

The natural facility which ſome writers appear to poſſeſs, forms no difficulty to this ſyſtem. Such authors as a Fielding and a Goldſmith, a Sheridan and

* This diſtinction, is obſerved by Mrs. Piozzi, in her laſt work. "Whoever lives in the happy poſſeſſion of great *mental qualities* may, by turning every *faculty of his mind* to one ſet purpoſe, form, by degrees, that which we call a TALENT for ſome particular ſcience, art, or ſtudy; and I doubt not but Mr. Pope might have been as good an Aſtronomer or Chemiſt as ever he was a Poet; ſo might Metaſtaſio, probably, had they concentrated their powers, and faſtened them on *that* branch of knowledge inſtead of the bough they choſe; while Shakeſpeare, Arioſto, Handel, Ferguſon, muſt have been what they were, and that of neceſſity; their GENIUS was too powerful for them to ſtop."

and a Wolcot, are not ſuppoſed to have overwhelmed their minds by extraneous ſtudies; and ſuch writers are often even very illiterate. They addreſs themſelves to the heart, and not to the head. But ſtill from *induſtry*, and pertinacity of attention, is their rapidity of combination derived; and not from what marvelling ignorance ſometimes regards as inſpiration or organiſation. They have given a ſtrong direction to their mind, in the great ſyſtem of human life; they therefore excel in that point, though they may be, and generally are, deficient in other literary qualities; for we ſhall always find that no man can know what he has not learnt, or know that ſuddenly which requires an habitual attention. He who would imitate the works of Nature muſt firſt accurately obſerve them, and accurate obſervation is to be expected from thoſe only who take *great pleaſure* in it. It is the obſervation of Beattie on Poetical Genius. Pope declared he could not purſue any ſubject without *pleaſure*; he could not perform the taſks ſet by his ſtupid Pedagogues. Here are the opinions of two Poets, and not a word of inſpiration. None but mad Bards dream of inſpiration. Metaſtaſio laughs at all poetic inſpiration, and made a poem as mechanically as others make a watch. When Du Freſnoy exclaims, in the ordinary language, of

> That majeſty, that grace ſo rarely given
> To mortal man, *not taught by Art*—but *Heaven!*

Reynolds aſſerts, in a note---"This excellence, however expreſſed, whether by Genius, Taſte, or the gift of Heaven, *I am confident may be acquired.*"

And

And indeed, if we attend to the precious obſervations of thoſe who have excelled in art or ſcience, we ſhall hear of no romance of original powers, no inſpirations from nature, no divine impulſe that creates a world at a word. The painter diſcovers that it is long before the pencil accompliſhes thoſe beauties which he has long meditated, and the poet that he conſumes many years in verſe before a great poem is even attempted. The following facts trace the progreſſive powers of genius: Reynolds painted many hours every day during the long ſpace of thirty years; Goldſmith compoſed his poems by ſlow and laborious efforts, and they are the finiſhed productions of ſeveral years. Churchill was a verſifier at fifteen, but was not known as a poet till after thirty. Sterne, who read at leaſt as much as he thought, was not known till a late period of life. Addiſon, before he commenced his Spectators, had amaſſed materials with the aſſiduity of a ſtudent.* The immortal work of Monteſquieu was the beloved occupation of twenty years; the wit of Butler was not extemporaneous, but painfully elaborated from notes which he inceſſantly accumulated. Rawley, the confidential friend of Bacon, has recorded, that he had twelve copies of his Inſtauration every year inceſſantly reviſed, and augmented,

* Young, in his poetical Epiſtle to Tickle, alluding to Addiſon's Spectators, ſays,

"*A chance amuſement* poliſh'd half an age."

But it has been ſince diſcovered, that the reverſe is the fact; for Addiſon had collected his materials to the amount of *three folio volumes!*

augmented, till at length it became, as he terms it, "a pyramid of learning," Gefner the poet, I am aſſured, wrote with great labour and ſevere reviſals, yet all his pieces have the air of unpremeditated compoſition. The familiar verſes of Berni, the burleſque Poet, Tiraboſchi ſays, (by the manuſcripts of his work, ſtill exiſting) were produced by inceſſant retouches. And, to cloſe our teſtimonies, the Emilius of Rouſſeau was the fruit, to employ the writer's own energetic language, of twenty years meditation, and of three years compoſition.

Among the advocates of our preſent ſyſtem we rank the firſt geniuſes of the age. Johnſon, Helvetius, and Reynolds, have ceaſeleſsly enforced it's principles. Authorities from periods more remote are not wanting; Quintilian and Locke conſider men to have an equal aptitude to mental capacity, and Paſcal ſays, that what is called nature, is only our firſt habit; and Buffon affirmed that "*Genius* is only a greater aptitude to *Patience*," applied to every thing which contributes to form Genius. *Invention* itſelf depends on Patience; contemplate your ſubject long, till a ſort of electric ſpark convulſes for a moment the brain, and ſpreads down to the very heart a glow of irritation.---This deſcription is remarkable.

In the Diſcourſes of Reynolds, this principle is laid down as the foundation of all excellence in art. "Not to enter into metaphyſical diſcuſſions on the natnre and eſſence of *genius*, I will venture to aſſert, that *aſſiduity*, unabated by difficulty, and a *diſpoſition* eagerly directed to the object of it's purſuit,

ſuit, will produce effects ſimilar to thoſe which ſome call the reſult of *natural powers.*" Johnſon has touched on this topic in the twenty-fifth and forty-third Ramblers, and, in the perſon of Imlach, we are inſtructed, that when he *reſolved* to *make* himſelf a poet, he tells us that "he ſaw every thing with a new purpoſe." The entire work of Helvetius inculcates the ſame principles.

Rouſſeau is the adverſary of this ſyſtem; he adopts the popular notion that the aptitude of men for the underſtanding merely depends on their reſpective organiſation. The French Plato, it is well known, contradicts himſelf throughout his works; and on no ſubject ſo much as on the preſent. Helvetius has collected his contradictions; the ſureſt and the moſt modeſt mode of confuting a writer of the fineſt genius. He has alſo thrown out an obſervation, which diſcloſes the ſource of the errors of Rouſſeau. He ſays, "The contradictions of this celebrated writer are not to be wondered at. His *obſervations* are almoſt always *juſt*, and his *principles* almoſt always *falſe* and *trite*. From hence his errors. Little ſcrupulous in examining opinions generally received, the number of thoſe he adopts impoſe on him."

We ſee the opinion of Reynolds, on the genius for painting; we ſhall contraſt it with that of Rouſſeau; and we may then inquire, if, on this ſubject, the opinion of a philoſopher and a painter is not to be preferred to him who only was a philoſopher.

Rouſſeau,

Rouſſeau, in his Emilius, book iii. p. 100, amuſes his readers with an anecdote. He tells us, he was acquainted with a ſervant who, having frequently obſerved his maſter paint and deſign, felt a furious paſſion to become a painter and deſigner. He paſſed three years, nailed to his chair, in painting and deſigning; and nothing but *attendance on his maſter* could take him away from his pleaſing occupations. At length, favoured by his maſter, and aſſiſted by the inſtructions of an artiſt, he quitted his livery, and lived by the produce of his pencil.---I ſhall now quote the very expreſſions our author employs: "Till a certain point, perſeverance ſuffices in lieu of genius; he has reached this point, and will never paſs it. The conſtancy and emulation of this honeſt man are laudable; but he will never paint but for ſign-poſts."

With facts like theſe, the ſyſtem I have adopted is ever combated; but I could never ſee in one of theſe facts any thing which would ſuffer an inveſtigation. Here is a young man, who has already attained a certain age, who is in the daily ſervice of his maſter, and who, without preparatory inſtructions, or various models, feels "the eager diſpoſition," and the neeeſſary "aſſiduity." But both the diſpoſition and the aſſiduity are very imperfect. An artiſt who is inceſſantly performing domeſtic buſineſs, muſt be claſſed among thoſe whoſe moral ſituation infallibly enfeebles, and almoſt annihilates, genius. This young man, had he known no other ſervice, but his art, and no other maſter but a Reynolds, it is not improbable, with his

his diſpoſition and aſſiduity, might have become a great artiſt. All this only tends to prove, that the great difficulty of becoming a man of genius conſiſts, among others, in his moral ſituation; and that no footman has any chance of becoming a great artiſt.

On this delicate topic I ſhall hazard the following rapid glance: In the rude periods of ſocicty, when a writer can have but few predeceſſors, he will pour forth, what Milton elegantly and ſweetly terms "Virgin Fancies." He muſt then meditate on the great original Nature; the impreſſions muſt be vivid, though rude, and the combinations novel, though wild. Some, whoſe phyſical ſenſibility, improved by imperceptible habit, may receive ſenſations more lively than others, will exerciſe a facility and celerity of conception apparently ſupernatural to the vulgar and the ignorant. In the latter claſs even the higheſt minds muſt then be ranked; and it is not improbable that the artiſt himſelf is not leſs perſuaded than his admirers, that he is agitated by a certain impulſe, and that his performances could not be produced by human means. *Eſt Deus in Nobis,* exclaims the ſelf wondering Ovid, at a later period indeed, but when the philoſophy of the mind had made but little progreſs. Hence the origin of that fanciful interpoſition of nature in the caſe of men of genius; and it is then that poets are regarded as prophets, and philoſophers as magicians.

The Monkiſh ages blended many of the abſurdities of polytheiſm with their peculiar ones; and it was

was in this period, Eraſmus informs us, that that Gothic adage was formed, worthy of Monkiſh taſte and Monkiſh credulity; *poeta naſcitur, non fit*; which an excellent judge of poetry (Ben Jonſon) contradicts, by affirming, that a poet may be *made*, as well as *born*.* But a great revolution appears in the world of taſte; the flame of inveſtigation riſes gradually in the moſt ſecret retirements of nature. She comes, in all her ſimplicity, and all her ſolitary majeſty, unaccompanied by the adventitious ſplendours of fancy, the groteſque chimeras of aſtoniſhment, and the terrific forms of ſuperſtition, When we underſtand nature, what becomes of apparitions, of witchery, of prophecy, and the inſpiration of genius?

Genius may now be divided into an enthuſiaſm caught from nature, and an enthuſiaſm received from art.

The enthuſiaſm from nature is diſtinguiſhed by it's facility, celerity, and vividneſs; ſufficient to form an ardent effuſion in the early periods of ſociety. Such are the relicks of all ancient poetry. But as the ſphere of poetical invention muſt then be very circumſcribed, we obſerve, in ſuch compoſitions, a recurrence of the ſame objects and the ſame

* Goldſmith ſays of Nero, he was deſirous of becoming a Poet, but unwilling to undergo the pains of ſtudy, which a proficiency in that art requires; he was deſirous of being *a Poet ready made* "Goldſmith was a judge by experience; his poems are really *made*, but were not readily *made*; taken up at different times, and purſued through long intervals; the poetry of a philoſophical age, the union of *reaſon* and *taſte*; but *inſpiration* never, certainly, entered into his thoughts.

ſame ideas. Man *creates* by *imitation*; but he creates little in the infancy of ſociety, becauſe he has ſcarcely any thing to imitate. When we examine the effuſions of the Bards, the wild poetry of the Indians, and even Oſſian, who probably has received many modern embelliſhments, we perceive that paucity of ideas which muſt be natural at this period of ſociety.*

This enthuſiaſm from nature diminiſhes in the progreſs of refinement. Artiſts not infrequently complain that nature is nearly exhauſted, and not without reaſon; for it would, perhaps, aſtoniſh ſome, if they were ſhown how very few *original* notions form the great treaſury of human invention. Nature is regular in her grand characteriſtics. She is ever the ſame univerſal power; but in the progreſs of ſociety a great variation obtains in the human paſſions. We all think alike on certain objects in their general conception, but moſt think differently in their individual examination; hence criticiſm has obſerved, that the beauties of art are ſometimes local, and ſometimes univerſal. Pure nature at length diſguſts by it's obviouſneſs and it's facility; elegance, the characteriſtic of refinement, means a ſelection, and at this period the offenſive rudeneſs

* Homer muſt not be quoted as an example of the enthuſiaſm from nature: nor can he be conſidered as the moſt original, becauſe he is the moſt ancient of our claſſic poets. We are told that ſcarcely any ſpecies of learning was unknown to him; and it is probable that the Mæonian was not more original than his imitator the Mantuan, and that his immortal labours were compoſed with an enthuſiaſm from art as well as from nature.

rudeneſs of truth is diſguiſed by the attractive graces of veriſimilitude. A noble ſentiment occupies the ſoul of the artiſt, and he toils after an ideal perfection. The richeſt combinations throw their dazzling light on his imagination; emulation rivals and ſurpaſſes; in this glorious ſtrife individual is oppoſed to individual and people to people. Our galleries are filled with pictures, and our libraries with poems.

A diverſity of genius becomes more diſtinguiſhable as taſte becomes more exquiſite. One kind is peculiar to this age; the genius of ſeveral can now be made to produce an original one. A ſtudent, to borrow an expreſſion from chemiſtry, amalgamates the characteriſtics of preceding maſters. The hiſtory of the orders in architecture is the hiſtory of genius. We have firſt the rude Tuſcan, then the chaſte Doric, and the elegant Ionic, and the light Corinthian; till at length appears the Compoſite, uniting theſe varieties.

Models are now propoſed by critics; for Art is now ſuſpended on a point; if by our dexterity we preſerve not the equilibrium, if we paſs or decline from the point, we ſlide into barbariſm. In vain ſome daring ſpirits ſcorn the mandates of taſte; Time is the avenger of neglected Criticiſm.

At this period ſome, enamoured of the illuſive idea of *original powers,* pretend to draw merely from the fountains of nature. Uneducated artiſts occaſionally appear among the lower occupations of life, who are immediately received as original geniuſes. But it is at length perceived, that the genuine

genuine requiſites of poetry, at this period of refinement, are not only beyond their reach, but often beyond their comprehenſion. Theſe *inſpired* geniuſes have never ſurvived the tranſient ſeaſon of popular wonder, and generally derive their mediocrity from the facility of conſulting the finiſhed compoſitions of true genius. I know of no exception to this obſervation.

Nor muſt we conceive that that vein of imitation which runs through the works of great artiſts, is a mechanical proceſs. By an intenſe ſtudy of preceding maſters they are taught the enchantments of art; marvellous and exquiſite ſtrokes which only glimmer in Nature. A fine copy of nature affects their organs more than a real ſcene. On examination, it will be found that the moſt capital productions of our firſt artiſts, are really compoſed in this manner. Raphael borrowed as freely from other painters as Milton from other poets.

It may now be enquired, that, ſince we acknowledge there are cauſes which may diſable a genuine ſtudent from *acquiring genius*, what is gained by this new ſyſtem? We reply, an uſeful knowledge of truth, and a contempt for that popular prejudice, which ever echoes the pernicious notion, that an *artiſt* muſt be *born* with a *peculiar genius* or intellectual conſtruction.

An ardent youth is ſoon diſmayed at the firſt difficulties of art, becauſe he eaſily imagines that a maxim which has been ſo long received as inconteſtable is therefore incontrovertable. I believe

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that the ſucceſs of an artiſt oftener depends on *good luck* than on *organiſation*. Ariſtotle has ſaid, that to become eminent in any profeſſion three things are requiſite; nature, ſtudy, and practice. How often does it become neceſſary to eraſe the word *nature*, and ſupply it's place by *good fortune!* We often loſe much when we inform a young artiſt, that he muſt have been *born* a poet, or a painter; ſince it is impoſſible to decide whether he is born ſuch unleſs he practiſes the arts; and it is certain that no excellence in art can be acquired without long and unwearied induſtry. Artiſts who have evinced nothing of this *birth-right* in their early attempts have ſometimes concluded by being great artiſts. Induſtry, whether it conſiſt in an inceſſant exercise of the faculties, by meditating on the labours of others, or in obſervations on what paſſes around us, is the ſureſt path of Fame; but ſuch intervening obſtacles as may oppoſe our progreſs, are in the power, not of philoſophy, but of fortune.

There is a remarkable obſervation made by Socrates on this intereſting ſubject, which, while it allows much to a certain *prediſpoſition* in ſome minds over others, includes the neceſſity of induſtry. He ſays: "As we ſee ſome bodies more robuſt than others, ſo there are alſo ſouls more or leſs vigorous in compariſon to each other. But there is no diſpoſition which does not improve greatly by culture; the moſt happy diſpoſitions, as well as the leſs favoured, have need of inſtruction and ſtudy in order to EXCEL in any thing whatever." If therefore

fore "the leſs favoured diſpoſitions," by labour vigorouſly continued, at length acquire *excellence*, the great point in the Helvetian Syſtem (if we are to call it thus) is confirmed. Lavater has, with his accuſtomed enthuſiaſm, adopted the popular idea of Genius. He ſtrenuouſly aſſerts that "A man can only do what he is capable of doing, or be but what he is. He can riſe to a certain degree; but farther he cannot go were his life at ſtake.—By dint of application you may equal a man of talents who is careleſs; and, with conſiderable talents, it is poſſible to come near genius which has never had the opportunity or the means of unfolding itſelf; or rather *application* SEEMS to riſe to the level of *talents*, and *talents* to the level of *genius*. Every one muſt remain what he is; only it is poſſible for him, to a certain degree, to perfect, to extend, and to unfold himſelf. Every individual is a maſter within the circle of his own domain, be it great or ſmall. He may cultivate his own eſtate in ſuch a manner that it's revenue may equal that of a territory twice as large, whoſe cultivation is neglected."

This literary controverſy, which has lately been ſo frequently renewed, turns entirely on a miſconſtruction of terms. That which the moderns call *an aptitude to patience* is only another term for what the *vulgar* call *genius*. This certainly depends on ORGANISATION.—Induſtry can do every thing but create this power. It is with *genius* as with *ſinging*: a finger may acquire taſte, art, and every refinement; but a VOICE muſt be the GIFT of NATURE.

On Literary Industry.

WHEN youthful genius meditates on a great compoſition, he does not uſually reflect on the mode of it's performance; his deſpair is equal to his admiration; and there is danger that he may reſemble the young arithmetician, who reſigned his art, becauſe in the firſt leſſons he had obſerved the total amount of an immenſe ſeries, which he could not ſuppoſe he was *born* to comprehend.

If a Savage wandering in his woods, accuſtomed to no other habitation than his dark cave, or ill-conſtructed hovel, ſhould diſcover an edifice conſiderable in it's magnitude and regular in it's arrangement, he would immediately conclude that it was the reſidence of a divine being, conſtructed by divine power: he would conſider that no human hand could raiſe the columns, and no human deſign could invent ſo beautiful an order. If the Savage, however, becomes inſtructed, he diſcovers that it's author was a being of his own ſpecies, that the hand which erected was ſuperior in ſkill, but not in ſtrength, to his own; and that, if he would ſubmit to the ſame directions which conducted the other, he might himſelf be capable of producing a ſimilar compoſition. This Savage is the unreflecting reader, or that ſimple youth whoſe admiration cloſes with deſpair.

Few works of magnitude preſented themſelves at once, in full extent to their authors; patiently

were

were they examined, and inſenſibly were they formed. We often obſerve this circumſtance noticed in their prefaces. Writers have propoſed to themſelves a little piece of two acts, and the farce has become a comedy of five; an eſſay ſwells into a treatiſe, and a treatiſe into volumes!

Let us trace the progreſs of the mind in the formation of it's ſpeculations. At the firſt glance a man of genius throws around a ſubject he perceives not more than one or two ſtriking circumſtances unobſerved by another. As he revolves the ſubject, the whole mind is gradually agitated; acquiring force by exertion, he diſcovers talents that he knew not he poſſeſſed. At firſt he ſaw (except the few leading objects which invited his contemplation) every thing dimly; to the ſtudious eye of genius every thing becomes orderly and diſtinct; the twilight gradually diſperſes, and every form ſhines in the brilliant light of imagination. Like viewing a landſcape at an early hour in a ſummer morning, the riſing ſun perhaps only reſts on a particular object, and the ſcene is wrapt in miſt; as the light and warmth increaſe the miſts fade, and the ſcene aſſumes it's varied charms. Gibbon tells us, of his Roman Hiſtory, "At the outſet all was dark and doubtful; even the title of the Work, the true æra of the Decline and Fall of the Empire; the limits of the introduction, the diviſions of the chapters, and the order of the narration; and I was often tempted to caſt away the labour of ſeven years." Winckelman was long loſt in compoſing his capital work, The Hiſtory of Art; a hundred

fruitleſs attempts were made before he could ſeize the leading idea. Akenſide exquiſitely deſcribes the progreſs of genius in it's delightful reveries.

In the preceding eſſay we have obſerved that the greateſt works have been inſenſibly formed; that the ſlighteſt conceptions may ſerve for the leading circumſtances of even works of magnitude, three modern compoſitions of great and kindred merit may prove. That exquiſite poem Les Jardins, of the Abbé de Lille, derives it's exiſtence from the ſimple circumſtance of a lady aſking for a few verſes on rural topics. His ſpecimens pleaſed, and the poet, animated by a ſmile, heaped ſketches on ſketches, till he found himſelf enabled to weave them into a concording whole, which forms one of the fineſt didactic poems in the language. "The Botanic Garden" was at firſt only a few looſe deſcriptions of flowers, which caſually excited the poet's philoſophical curioſity; and we have only to lament that the Engliſh bard wanted the addreſs or the induſtry of the French poet: A deficiency of intereſting order is the radical defect of that compoſition. "The Pleaſures of Memory" was the ſlow and perfect production of ten years; the poet at firſt propoſed a ſimple deſcription in a few lines; but, imperceptibly conducted by his meditations, from theſe few verſes was at length compoſed a poem, important alike for it's extent, it's inveſtigation, and it's beauty. Similar circumſtances gave the origin of the Lutrin; and the Dunciad is an amplification of the Mac Fleenoe of Dryden. The Henriade of Voltaire was at firſt

only

only intended for a poem on the League, and it's want of unity of deſign, as an epic, aroſe from this circumſtance.

MEDITATION may be defined the *induſtry of the mind*. On it's habitual exertion depend all our great efforts; for literary induſtry to obtain it's purpoſe muſt become habitual. It is then, wherever we go, whatever we ſee, from what we read, and what we hear, ſome acquiſitions are brought to adorn our favourite topics. Like that ancient general, who, in the profoundeſt peace, practiſed ſtratagems of war, and when walking with his friends, and arriving at ſome remarkable ſpot, was accuſtomed to conſult with them on a mode of defence or attack. Hence he derived the rare talent of ever being accompanied by his genius, and to this general the victories of war were obtained by the labours of peace. The great poet and the great painter are alike intent on their reſpective objects; and do, no leſs than this general, paſs their remarkable ſpots without bringing home ſentiments and images, forms and colours.

The greateſt works have been derived from petty commencements, and always formed by ſlow and gradual renovations of induſtry. Induſtry, indeed, is but a mean word, and appears more appropriate to mechanical labours than to the operations of genius. If genius is to be conſidered as inſpiration, the philoſophers of this literary age will acknowledge that we have produced no works of genius; and that even the liveliеſt conceptions of our poets are rarely formed with that celerity and

fury which ſome are yet ſo credulous and ſo ignorant as to ſuppoſe.* Whenever the manuſcripts of a great genius have been diſcovered, this truth has ever been confirmed. The induſtry which we are now to underſtand reſembles but little mechanical aſſiduity; it is a continued exerciſe of the nobleſt faculties, which expand as they are uſed; a reſolute intellectual labour, a combination of many means to obtain one end. It is ſtudy invigorated by meditation; it is criticiſm, which, if we may ſo expreſs ourſelves, is a continuation or ſupplement of the ſpirit of the original author. This

* Freſnoy ſays, in his Art of Painting,

By tedious toil no paſſions are expreſs'd,
His hand who feels them ſtrongeſt paints them beſt.

Reynolds explains this popular prejudice in this manner: "A Painter, whatever he may feel, will not be able to expreſs it on canvaſs without having recourſe to a recollection of thoſe principles by which that paſſion is expreſſed; the mind thus occupied is not likely at the ſame time to be poſſeſſed with the paſſion which he is repreſenting, an image may be ludicrous, and in it's firſt conception make the Painter laugh as well as the Spectator; but the difficulty of his art makes the Painter, in the courſe of his work, equally grave and ſerious, whether he is employed on the moſt ludicrous or the moſt ſolemn ſubject."

It is exactly the ſame with literary compoſition. When Butler or Cervantes were compoſing their Quixote or Hudibras, they were as grave, and as laborouſly applied to their page as Homer or Milton. But how many imagine, that the ludicrous compoſitions of the firſt were written as ludicrouſly and as eaſily as they appear to the world! A modern comic writer was one day very ſeriouſly thoughtful; being aſked by a friend why he was ſo, replied, "I am making a joke for Mrs. Jordan."

This induſtry is that art, which ſeizes, as if it were by the rapidity of inſpiration, whatever it diſcovers in the works of others which may enrich it's own ſtores; which knows by a quick apprehenſion what to examine and what to imbibe; and which receives an atom of intelligence from the minds of others on it's own mind, as an accidental ſpark, falling on a heap of nitre, is ſufficient to raiſe a powerful blaze.

If we look into literary biography, we perceive that every illuſtrious writer, in one mode or another, was an indefatigable ſtudent. Tillotſon obſerves, that whenever the ancient hiſtorians deſcribe an eminent character, they ever employ theſe expreſſions: that he was *incredibili induſtria, diligentia ſingulari.* Cicero and Pliny, to habituate themſelves to the graces of the Grecian writers, even at a remote period of life, practiſed the labours of tranſlation, and there was no mode or art they omitted proper for correction. They read their work to a few friends, they recited it to an audience, and even ſent it to their literary correſpondents for emendation. This unwearied zeal has rendered their works immortal, and capable of equalling whatever the ambition of the moderns can oppoſe. Voltaire, lively as he may appear, was an indefatigable ſtudent, and never read, even at the cloſe of life, without a pen in his hand. The immortal and voluminous labours of the philoſophic Buffon are derived from the ſimple circumſtance of early riſing; he long ſtrove againſt a natural indulgence of eaſe, and uſed ſevere precautions. Perhaps no

ſtudent was more laborious than Milton, and his induſtry was even equal to his genius. Obſerve the modeſt and remarkable expreſſion he employs, in one of his proſe works, alluding to his intention of compoſing an epic. After mentioning Taſſo, he adds: "It haply would be no raſhneſs, from an *equal diligence* and *inclination*, to preſent the like." Such was the vigilant induſtry of Pope, that he appears to have derived his genius from this characteriſtic.

It is a truth of ſome importance in literature to be known, that the farther progreſs we make in knowledge renders ſtudy more neceſſary; that as taſte is more refined labour becomes more eſſential; and that however modern writers muſt loſe ſomething of originality, they have, even if their ſubject is preoccupied, more difficulties to overcome, more art to diſplay, more labour to exerciſe, more novelty to court, than their anceſtors, who wrote with the licentious ſpirit of their age; and who, though not ſuperior in point of courage, handled their pen with a ferocity not permitted to their more poliſhed deſcendants.

On the Influence of Climate on the Human Mind.

AMONG the follies of the wiſe, may be ranked that ſyſtem which circumſcribes the energies of the human mind by the influence of climate. It has been confuted, and is ſtill believed, for there are ſome whom no confutations can confute; we ſhall form an enquiry into it's origin, with ſome notices of that fanciful chain it has thrown over the intellects of the moſt vigorous geniuſes, and we ſhall inculcate the independence of the intellectual powers. Denina in a recent work (1790) enquires why polite literature has made ſo ſlow a progreſs in Germany. Do ſtoves render the mind heavier than coal-fires? or the beer of England occaſion more vivacity than the beer of Germany? Is the atmoſphere more denſe in Germany than in Great Britain?—This is a ſpecimen of that critical ſyſtem which has been carried to ſuch exceſs.

It derives it's modern rejuveneſcence from the brilliant Monteſquieu, who, ever vigilant in ſtriking the mind by novelties, diſcovered, in the writings of ſome of the ancients, a few fanciful conjectures on the influence of climate on the human mind, and theſe he alſo extended to manners. Curious abſurdities, not leſs eccentric, remain yet for ſome future Monteſquieu to adopt. Theſe ſlight conjectures he ſeized with avidity, amplified with ingenuity, decorated by the graces of fancy, and divulged

divulged with the triumphant air of a modern diſcovery.

Baillet, who wrote at the cloſe of the laſt century, without a ſolitary charm of Monteſquieu's fancy, was well acquainted with this extravagant notion. Hence, perhaps, did Monteſquieu, with ſome kindred geniuſes, derive the hint. In his volume on National Prejudices, he adverts to this ſyſtem, and quotes Hippocrates, Plato, Ariſtotle, Seneca, and others, who had conceived that the temperature of the air contributes ſomething to the natural diſpoſitions of the mind. Long anterior to Monteſquieu, our own Milton expreſſed this prejudice;* and as Filangieri obſerves, Chardin, Fontenelle,

* It is curious to obſerve, that Spenſer, that child of fancy, had on this ſubject, a ſounder philoſophy than Milton. I allude to his View of the State of Ireland; it is compoſed in the dialogue manner, and one of the ſpeakers conceives that the barbarity of that country proceeds from the very *genius* of the *ſoil*, or *influence* of the *ſtars*. But he is juſtly reprimanded by the other, in expreſſions ſo philoſophical and pleaſing, that I ſhall tranſcribe them: "Surely, I ſuppoſe this but a vain conceit of *ſimple men*, which *judge things* by their *effects*, and not by their *cauſes*; for I would rather think the cauſe of this evil, which hangeth upon that country, to proceed rather of the unſoundneſs of the counſels, and plots which you ſay have been oftentimes laid for the reformation, or of faintneſs in following and affecting the ſame, than of any ſuch fatal courſe appointed of God, as you miſdeem; but *it is the manner of men, that when they are fallen in any abſurdity*, or *their actions ſucceed not as they would, they are always ready to impute the blame thereof unto the heavens, ſo to excuſe their own follies* and *imperfections*." The admirable Spenſer is another inſtance

tenelle, Du Bos, and others, had explained and adopted the notion. But what the reaſoning of Chardin, the wit of Fontenelle, and the ingenuity of Du Bos failed to eſtabliſh, was fixed by the ſeductive eloquence of Monteſquieu. His brilliant ſtrokes dazzled the eyes of Europe, and iced with an additional froſt, the heart of many a literary Ruſſian and Dane. It is thus follies are hereditary among writers, and one generation perpetuates or revives the extinct follies of another.

It was the talent of exquiſite compoſition that gave to Monteſquieu the power of diſguiſing an exploded theory. Who can reſiſt ſuch poignant epigrams as theſe, allowing that every lively epigram is a concluſive argument?—"The empire of climate is the firſt of all empires."---"As we diſtinguiſh climates by degrees of latitude, we might diſtinguiſh them, thus to expreſs myſelf, by degrees of ſenſibility."---"In thoſe countries, inſtead of precepts, we muſt have padlocks."---Such is the witty ſyſtem of the preſident Monteſquieu, which perhaps was firſt conceived with a ſmile, but conducted with ingenious gravity. We ſuffer our follies to become agreeable, when we ſuffer them to become familiar.

When the "Spirit of laws" was firſt publiſhed, every literary centinel did not ſilently admit the enemy

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inſtance to prove that an exquiſite imagination may be combined with the ſoundeſt intellect; and it is now, perhaps, the firſt time that Spenſer the poet has been quoted as Spenſer the philoſopher.

enemy of intellectual freedom, nor was every genius rendered somniferous by the corruptions of wit. The alarm was given. This paradox kindled the philosophic indignation of Gray, and inspired his exquisite muse to commence a poem of considerable magnitude, designed to combat a position so fatal to intellectual exertion. Churchill revolted from the degrading notion; a line on genius conveys his idea, that it is not circumscribed by local situation; for says he,

"It may, hereafter, e'en in Holland rise."

Armstrong found it necessary to inveigh with sarcastic acerbity against this system; but it was the philosophic Hume who, with solid arguments, crushed the brilliant epigrams of Montesquieu.

Filangieri, who had all the advantage of posterior knowledge united to an investigating genius, has marched between these systematisers and their adversaries, by attempting to shew that Climate influences the mind as a relative, not as an absolute cause, and that the difference is not perceptible in temperate climates. But one of his political reveries is that of drying marshes and felling woods to change the character of a people. I much fear that the Italian (for his nation are most politic refiners) has only mistaken the national humour of Addison, who tells us, that "a famous university in this land was formerly very much infested with *puns*; but whether or no this might not arise from the *fens* and *marshes* in which it was situated, and

which are now *drained,* I muſt leave to the determination of more ſkilful naturaliſts."

As France is a very extenſive country, and has great variation of climate, it offered an ample circuit for theſe ſyſtematiſers to verify their favourite poſitions, by tracing the effects of climate through that diverſified country. The inhabitants of cold Picardy were imagined to be eminent for their indefatigable labour, and their writers ſtudents of great erudition. But here, as almoſt in every inſtance, where facts are produced to confirm this fanciful theory, we ſhall find that moral are often taken for phyſical effects. Baillet remarks on this obſervation concerning Picardy, that the induſtry of it's writers is owing to thoſe devaſtations of war, which, having injured the fortunes of the natives, induced them rather to apply to uſeful than to agreeable compoſitions, as a means of ameliorating their fortune. Normandy having great inequality of climate was ſuppoſed to occaſion a ſimilar inequality in the literary productions of it's authors; and Auvergne having high mountains and deep vallies, was conjectured to produce both men of great genius and great dullneſs; for thoſe born on the mountains were ſaid to have more delicate organs, and a more ætherial ſpirit than the groſs and ſtupid ſtudents of the vallies. Such are the materials, which, with many others, might be employed in a hiſtory of the follies of philoſophy.

But if an Engliſhman is amuſed by theſe airy fancies, he will come at length to reſent, with a due ſpirit of indignation, the national attacks which

theſe

theſe fantaſtic ſyſtematiſers have conſtantly levelled at our country. Britain has been conſidered by them as a Beotia. Profound diſquiſitions, and ſarcaſtic exultations have been made concerning our foggy iſland; but the ſame fogs remain, while the fineſt compoſitions now enrich our language. The claſſics of England exhibit models of the pureſt taſte to literary Europe; but moral cauſes long impeded the progreſs of taſte in our country. We may reſound our triumphs to the manes of Du Bos,* of Monteſquieu, and Winckelman, who have affirmed that we could have no genius for the fine arts, becauſe they informed the world that the ſenſibility of taſte was obſtructed by an obnoxious clime. Such are the ſentiments which have been echoed from one writer to another, till even ſome of our own have been pleaſed to caluminate themſelves.

Among many curious criticiſms of foreigners, I muſt not paſs ſilently Winckelman's notion concerning Milton. He tells us, that all the deſcriptions in the Paradiſe Loſt, excepting the amorous and delicate ſcenes of the primeval pair, are like well-painted gorgons, which reſemble each other, but are always frightful; and this he attributes to the climate. But what is here attempted to be depreciated, every critic of taſte will conceive to be the terrible graces of a ſublime poeſy. As the ſubject is peculiar, and of the moſt elevated nature, ſo it found

* This writer conceives that a difference of talents in the ſame people, in different ages, is to be aſcribed to ſome *variation of their climate!*

found in Milton a genius as peculiar and faculties the moſt elevated. If the Engliſh Muſe has ſurpaſſed her ſiſters in loftineſs, ſhe yields not in the more delicate and ſweeter portions of her art. Of late we have excelled in pictureſque deſcription; the moſt pleaſing paintings of nature variegate the verſe of Thomſon, who, as a ſhrewd obſerver remarks, was born more northerly than Milton. Goldſmith has cultivated the ſame powers, and they have proved ſo attractive to the public taſte, that Engliſh verſe can now exhibit ſome of the moſt enchanting and the moſt vivid ſcenery in poetry. The Muſe was conſidered to be under "a ſkiey influence;" but whenever a national impediment is removed, (and time, in every poliſhed nation, ſubverts ſuch cauſes) that people will not fail of equalling the efforts of thoſe who have been placed in happier circumſtances.

Writers have yielded up their ſenſations and their reflections to this favourite theory. Spence has accounted for the turgidity of Lucan on the principles of this ſyſtem. He ſays, "The ſwellings in his poem may be partly accounted for, perhaps, from his being *born* in *Spain*, and in that part of it which was *fartheſt removed* from Greece and Rome." But the following inſtance will parallel any literary extravagance: When Dyer gave the "Fleece," he acquainted the world, to apologize for the defects of the poem, that "It was publiſhed under ſome *diſadvantages*; for many of it's *faults* muſt be imputed to the *air of a fenny country*, where I have been for the moſt part above theſe five

five years." Warburton, in his anonymous "Critical and Philoſophical Enquiry into the Prodigies, &c. of Hiſtorians," alluding to the eminent ſucceſs of the French in tranſlations of the ancients, imagines that our little emulation in this department of literature may be attributed to the *coldneſs* of our *climate*. I tranſcribe his words: "The Frenchman, vigorous and enterpriſing, is ambitious of poſſeſſion; while we, with a falſe *modeſty* and *coldneſs*, natural from our *climate*, content ourſelves with a diſtant admiration."

From this it would appear, that *our climate* has of late become *much warmer*, and therefore *we*, *leſs modeſt*; ſince we have enriched our language with ſome verſions of the claſſics, which vie with the beauty of the originals. Such criticiſms remind me of a couplet of De Foe, whoſe good ſenſe appears alſo to have wandered wildly into theſe fancies. In one of his political poems, he ſays of his hero William:

> "Batavian climates nouriſhed him awhile,
> Too great a *genius* for ſo *damp* a ſoil."

Even Milton credited this prejudice. He tells us, in one of his proſe works, that he intends to write an epic "out of our own ancient ſtories; if there be nothing *adverſe* in our *climate*, or the fate of this age." At a more remote period, when he was near the concluſion of his immortal labour, he adorns theſe erroneous notions by the charms of his

his verſe, and lays a peculiar ſtreſs on the word *cold*. Theſe are the lines:

> " ——————— higher argument
> Remains, ſufficient of itſelf to raiſe
> That name, unleſs an age too late, or *cold*
> *Climate*, or years, damp my intended wing."

Even Young, in "The Merchant," complains, that "his poetic vein *runs ſlow* in this cold climate."

The notion of this influence of the climate was indeed ſo univerſal in thoſe days, that Deſcartes feared that the warmth of the climate in France would too much exalt his imagination, and diſturb that temperate ſtate of the mind neceſſary for philoſophical diſcoveries. He therefore took refuge from the ſun in Holland. All the froſt of the northern climates could never render his burning imagination tepid; the viſionary would have dreamt on a pillow of ſnow.

On ſuch foundations reſt the brilliant edifice which the hand of Monteſquieu did not conſtruct, but only adorned. Every error of this kind long links an additional fetter on the human mind, and half the wiſdom of man now conſiſts in deſtroying the chains of his own fabrication.

Let us view this topic in a more inſtructive manner. Ariſtotle, in his Politics, obſerves, that the northern nations, and generally all Europe, are naturally courageous and robuſt, but are improper for mental exertion, without powers for meditation,

and

and without induſtry for the arts; on the contrary, the Aſiatics have great talents for works of genius, are inclined to reaſoning and meditation, and ſkilful in the invention and perfection of arts. The reverſe of all this, in the preſent age, is the truth. Ariſtotle drew this repreſentation from the exiſting ſcene; but had that acute mind reflected on the powers which the *cuſtoms* and the *government* of a people have over the human mind, he had then perceived that, not the froſts and ſnows of the northern realms made men addict themſelves to war, but that predatory genius which muſt prevail in a people who were conſtantly diſtreſſed by poverty and famine. When a new civilization had taken place, and the ſeverities of the climate were mitigated by the beneficial influence of art and ſcience; when the deſcendants of theſe men employed their armaments in commerce as well as in war; when their iron was plunged into the reluctant boſom of earth; when in their cities univerſities were erected, academies inſtituted, and the peaceful occupations of genius cheriſhed; then, while the ſame climate exiſted, the national characters became changed. Heroic and poliſhed Greece and Rome are now barbarous and puſillanimous; and the gravity and ſuperſtition of the Spaniard, the politic and aſſaſſinating ſpirit of the Italian, the diligence and ſuppleneſs of the Scotchman, and the ſuſpicioufneſs and profundity of the Engliſhman, are derived from their manners and governments.

It was once enquired why Paris and Toulouſe produced ſo many eminent lawyers. It was long attributed

attributed to the climate; till ſome reaſonable being diſcovered, that the univerſities of thoſe cities offered *opportunities* and *encouragements* for that *ſtudy* which others did not. The Germans have long been an injured literary nation. A taſte for ſcience and erudition having been diffuſed among that induſtrious people, they were conſtantly aſperſed by their lively neighbours for inveterate dullneſs and ſteril imaginations. The eminent ſucceſs of the French in the Belles Lettres, placed the frightened genius of that nation in a voluntary ſecluſion; of late, awakened from their ſtupor, they have produced ſome ſpirited and affecting works of imagination, which can fear no rivals.

From this, and the two preceding eſſays, we may conclude, that it is with a people as with an individual, and with an individual, as with a people. The human mind is indeed influenced not by climate, but by government; not by ſoils, but by cuſtoms; not by heat and cold, but by ſervitude and freedom. A happy education, an elegant leiſure, and a paſſion for glory, muſt form a great man; as an excellent government, an orderly liberty, and a popular felicity, muſt form a great people. But for theſe purpoſes numerous conjunctures muſt ſucceed each other, which, in the poſition of human affairs, can be but rare; and to the preſent moment no ſyſtem of education for the individual, or ſyſtem of government for the people has been diſcovered which can ſatisfy the philoſophical mind; a great people, like a great man, muſt therefore become a ſingularity.

On Novelty in Literature.

"ALL is ſaid," exclaims the lively Bruyere; but at the ſame moment, by his own admirable reflections, confutes the dreary ſyſtem he would eſtabliſh. An opinion of the exhauſted ſtate of literature has been a popular prejudice of remote exiſtence; and an unhappy idea of a wiſe ancient, who, even in his day, laments, that "of books there is no end," has been tranſcribed by great authors, who, however, cannot be deemed great politicians.

This opinion ſerves for the apology of the idle and the conſolation of the diſappointed; but it is to be lamented that it extinguiſhes the ardour of the ingenious. Had not genius felt itſelf ſuperior to this malicious *dictum* the world had wanted nearly all it's valued compoſitions. He who has critically examined any branch of literature has diſcovered how little of original invention is to be found even in the moſt excellent works. To add a little to his predeceſſors ſatisfies the ambition of the firſt geniuſes. The popular notion of literary novelty is an idea more faneiful than exact. Of theſe unreflecting cenſurers, many are yet to learn that their admired originals are not ſuch as they miſtake them to be either in the parts or the deſign of their works. We ſhall ſhew how the plans of the moſt original performances have been borrowed; and of the thoughts of the moſt admired compoſitions

compoſitions, ſome readers are yet to be inſtructed that they are not wonderful diſcoveries, but only truths, of which themſelves felt the conviction before the ingenuity of the author had arranged the intermediate and acceſſory ideas, by unfolding that confuſed ſentiment, which thoſe experience who are not accuſtomed to think with depth or accuracy.

Novelty, in it's rigid acceptation, will not be found in any judicious production. I am not, therefore, ſurpriſed at a literary incident which happened to a friend. To relieve the tedium of a temporary retirement he took with him ſeven epic poems; he amuſed his ſolitude by comparing them with each other; and the reſult was, that he found how much each had been indebted to it's predeceſſors. The ſame incidents had been tranſplanted, and the ſame characters had aſſumed a different name; but every poet had his peculiar colouring and diſpoſition, and had created while he imitated. Prior in his preface to "Solomon" with ſome exultation points out the imitations of the Epic Poets.

Voltaire, as a critic of taſte, is of the greateſt authority. He looked on every thing as imitation. He obſerves that the moſt original writers borrowed one from another, and ſays that the inſtruction we gather from books is like fire; we fetch it from our neighbours, kindle it at home, and communicate it to others, till it becomes the property of all. He has a curious paſſage, in which he traces ſome of the fineſt compoſitions to the

fountain head; and the reader ſmiles when he perceives that they have travelled in regular ſucceſſion through China, India, Arabia, and Greeee, to France and to England.

To the obſcurity of time are the ancients indebted for that originality in which they are imagined to excel. We know how frequently they accuſe each other; and to have borrowed copiouſly from preceding writers was not conſidered criminal by ſuch illuſtrious authors as Plato and Cicero. It has been obſerved of the Eneid of Virgil, that not only little invention is diſplayed in the Incidents, for it unites the plan of the Iliad and the Odyſſey, but even as to many of the particular lines, and certainly is very deficient in the variety of it's characters. But on writers ſo well known as the claſſical we ſhall not dwell.

Our own early writers have not more originality than modern genius may aſpire to reach. To imitate and to rival the Italians and the French formed their devotion. Chaucer, Gower, and Gawin Douglas were all ſpirited imitators, and frequely only maſterly tranſlators. Spenſer, the father of ſo many poets, is himſelf the child of the Auſonian Muſe; in borrowing the fancy of the Italian poetry, he unhappily adopted it's form. Shakeſpeare has liberally honoured many writers by unſparing imitations; he has availed himſelf of their ſentiments, their ſtyle, and their incidents. His Oberon was taken from a French Romance, and his Fairies are no more his own original invention, than the Sylphs are of Pope. Milton is inceſſantly

inceſſantly borrowing from the poetry of his day. In the beautiful Maſk of Comus he preſerved all the circumſtances of the work he imitated. The Paradiſe Loſt is believed to have been conceived from a myſtery, and many of it's moſt ſtriking paſſages are taken from other poets. Taſſo opened for him the Tartarean Gulph; the ſublime deſcription of the bridge may be found in Sadi, who borrowed it from the Turkiſh theology; the paradiſe of fools is a wild flower, tranſplanted from the wilderneſs of Arioſto. Jonſon was the ſervile ſlave of his ancient maſters; and the rich poetry of Gray is a wonderful tiſſue, woven on the frames, and compoſed with the gold threads of others. To Cervantes we owe Butler; and the united abilities of three great wits, in their Martinus Scriblerus, could find no other mode of conveying their powers but by imitating at once Don Quixote and Monſieur Ouſle. Pope, like Boileau, had all the ancients and moderns in his pay, the contributions he levied were not the pillages of a bandit, but the taxes of a monarch. Swift is much indebted for the plans of his two very original performances, The Travels of Gulliver, to the Voyages of Cyrano de Bergerac to the Sun and Moon; a writer, who, without the acuteneſs of Swift, has wilder flaſhes of fancy. Dr. Warton has obſerved many of his ſtrokes in Biſhop Godwin's Man in the Moon, who, in his turn, muſt have borrowed his work from Cyrano. The Tale of a Tub is an imitation of ſuch various originals, that they are too numerous here to mention. Wotton obſerved juſtly, that

in many places, the author's wit is not his own. Dr. Feriar's Eſſay on the Imitations of Sterne might be conſiderably augmented. Such are the writers, however, who imitate, but are inimitable!

We will now, quitting Britain, make a ſhort excurſion round the reſt of Europe, and viſit ſome of our neighbours, that we may not imagine they enjoy a ſuperiority over our own fellow citizens. Montaigne, with honeſt naiveté, compares his writings to a thread that binds the flowers of others; and that by inceſſantly pouring the waters of a few good old authors into his ſieve, ſome drops fall upon his paper. The good old man, elſewhere, acquaints us with a certain ſtratagem of his own invention, conſiſting of his inſerting whole ſentences from the ancients, without acknowledgment, that the critics might blunder, by giving *Nazardes* to Seneca and Plutarch, while they imagined they tweaked his noſe. Petrarch, who is not the inventor of that tender poetry of which he is the model, and Boccaccio, called the father of Italian novels, have alike profited by a ſtudious peruſal of writers, who are now only read by thoſe who have more curioſity than taſte; to the Tales of the Minſtrels was the Italian Tale-teller indebted for many of his plots. Boiardo has imitated Pulci, and Arioſto Boiardo. The madneſs of Orlando Furioſo, though it wears, by it's extravagance, a very original air, is only imitated from Sir Launcelot in the old Romance of Mort Arthur, with which, the late Mr. Warton obſerves, it agrees in every leading circumſtance; and what is the Cardenio of Cervantes

Cervantes but the Orlando of Arioſto? Taſſo has imitated the Iliad, and enriched his poem with epiſodes from the Eneid. It is curious to obſerve, that even Danté, wild and original as he appears, when he meets Virgil in the Inferno, warmly expreſſes his gratitude for the many fine paſſages for which he was indebted to his works, and on which he ſays he had "long meditated." Moliere and La Fontaine are conſidered to poſſeſs as much originality as any of the French writers; yet the learned Menage calls Moliere "un grand et habile picoreur;" and Boileau tells us, that La Fontaine borrowed his ſtyle and matter from Marot and Rabelais, and took his ſubjects from Boccaccio, Poggius, and Arioſto. Nor was the eccentric Rabelais the inventor of moſt of his burleſque narratives, and he is a very cloſe imitator of Folengo, the inventor of the macaronic poetry, and not a little indebted to the old *Facezie* of the Italians. Indeed Marot, Villon, as well as thoſe we have noticed, profited by the authors anterior to the age of Francis I. Bruyere incorporates whole paſſages of Publius Syrus in his work, as the tranſlator of the latter abundantly ſhews. To the Turkiſh ſpy was Monteſquieu beholden for his Perſian Letters, and a numerous croud are indebted to Monteſquieu. Corneille made a liberal uſe of Spaniſh literature; and the pure waters of Racine flowed from the fountains of Sophocles and Euripides.

Having thus traced that vein of imitation which runs through the productions of our greateſt

authors,* it remains to aſcertain an accurate notion of literary novelty.

Denina's work on the Revolutions of Literature, is formed on this principle: that there being a great uniformity in nature, when the perfection of thoſe arts which expreſs the paſſions is at length acquired, nature becomes exhauſted; and that at this period, to ſucceed in poetry or in eloquence, it would require either to extend nature, or to create new paſſions, which are alike impoſſible. If this were true, literary novelty might be, in the preſent refinement of the Belles Lettres, a hopeleſs project. We muſt, therefore, controvert this hypotheſis, or burn our pens.

What is a new thought? The queſtion has been reſolved by Boileau. It is not, ſays he, what the ignorant imagine; that is, a thought which no one ever conceived, or could have poſſibly conceived. On the contrary, it is a thought that might have occurred to any one, but that ſomebody has firſt expreſſed: it is what every one *thinks*, but is ſaid in a lively, fine, and new *manner*. Pope, no doubt, borrowed his definition of wit, or genius, from this remark. It is, as he ſays,

"What oft was *thought*, but ne'er ſo well *expreſs'd*."

It is, perhaps, with writing as with ſhooting; the art conſiſts in the *aim* of the ſportſman, but the

 objects

* Marville compares ſome of the firſt writers to bankers, who are rich with the aſſembled fortunes of individuals, and would be often ruined, were they too hardly drawn on.

objects are always the same. Good sense has been so in all ages, says Pope elsewhere, who, perhaps, had more good sense than any poet. If we analyse the most striking passages of our most original writers, we shall find that the naked idea had nothing uncommon. The finest thoughts derive their beauty from the glow and colouring of imagination. A friend of great taste, in examining and comparing the natural sentiments of two dialogues of vulgar courtship, in the Exmoor dialect, with congenial and similar ideas in poetical language, has proved that the ground-work of the human mind is always the same; and that all men think alike, but express themselves very differently. This essay, probably, only intended as a literary amusement, may however, be made to elucidate a philosophical truth.

Hence the most forcible passages of Shakespeare, are only delightful or energetic expressions of our own feelings. Great writers must, therefore, bear an affinity with each other; and will eagerly adopt the images, the sentiments, and the very expressions of a kindred genius. We may account, on this principle, for those similar passages which we meet with in different works, although we are certain that no connection existed between the writers. Hence sometimes an Englishman finds in Corneille an expression which he exclaims is worthy of Shakespeare; and a Frenchman discovers in Shakespeare, a sentiment which he feels equals the eloquence of Corneille.

It would, therefore, appear, that there is a MANNER IN EXPRESSION which may impart novelty to literary compoſition; and I add alſo, that there is another MANNER OF CHARACTER, which every writer of genius exhibits.

The Italians deſcribe a certain ſenſation by their *un non ſò che*; the French by their *je ne ſçai quoi*; and we frequently ſay "*a certain ſomething*." The foreign writers have compoſed a great deal concerning this quality; and perhaps they have obſcured what is not obſcure in itſelf; for what is this occult ſenſation but MANNER? It accompanies every intereſting object; it is the inexpreſſible charm which creates ſympathy, or the unknown ſomething which produces antipathy. Do we not obſerve the moſt eſſential truths on the moſt intereſting topics, enfeebled, and even rendered repulſive? And do we not ſometimes admire the moſt trivial objects when they are touched with all the felicity of manner? It ariſes from the abſence or the uſe of this prominent quality, which beſtows novelty on the moſt familiar and delight on the moſt arid topics. The French and Italians have a ſpecies of writing almoſt peculiar to themſelves. It is called by the former, *Rajeuniſſement*, and by the latter *Refaccimento*. This is nothing but a rejuveneſcence of their ancient authors, ſuch as are the verſions by Dryden and Pope of ſome of Chaucer's Tales. Every one is not equally ſucceſsful in this employment; and writers who poſſeſs a happineſs of manner, have diſplayed in theſe works it's

it's full force; they have given, by maſter-touches, all the pleaſure the originals once gave. In the hands of inferior writers, the ſame thoughts have been as vigilantly preſerved, but not as attractively. Several works of importance might be noticed, which could never be peruſed in the manner of their original authors; but ſince they have been re-written by men of genius every one peruſes them. *Manner* is the firſt acquirement of genius; it renders a ſonnet more precious than a long poem, and has made ſome authors more celebrated for ten pages, than others who in vain have written ten volumes.* Obſerve in two of the moſt popular French writers, a great contraſt of manner; Voltaire is a wit, and takes us by ſurpriſe; Rouſſeau is an orator, and inſinuates his ſoul into our own; one points his poliſhed epigrams, and the other ſteals on us by his pathetic ſentiments; our mind is the aim of Voltaire, but we yield our heart to Rouſſeau. It is this manner which enchants in Addiſon, pleaſes in Melmoth, and ſooths in Hawkeſworth; which ſparkles in the brilliant periods of Shafteſbury, riſes into majeſty in the grand

* Lord Bacon in his De Augmentis Scientiarum, in ſection xviii. on Rhetoric or Oratory, has obſerved certain ſtings and goads of ſpeech; he ſays there are many forms of ſpeech, which, although of the ſame ſignification, affect men differently; as a ſharp inſtrument penetrates more than a blunt one, ſuppoſing both of them urged with equal force. We are more affected by hearing this expreſſion: *How your enemies will triumph in this!* than if it were ſimply ſaid, *This will injure your affairs.*

grand tones of Bolingbroke, and awes in the ſolemn cadences of Johnſon.*

Another ſource of literary novelty may be derived from IMITATION. A ſervile imitation is inimical to the progreſs of art, but nothing is more neceſſary to preſerve the refinement of art, than a frequent recurrence to it's models. To literary echoes we may apply the ſenſible obſervation of Philip of Macedon, made to one who prided himſelf with imitating the notes of the nightingale; "I prefer the nightingale herſelf." We muſt firſt learn

* This *manner*, in every great writer, has not eſcaped obſervation. The quotations may gratify literary curioſity. The elegant author of Fitzoſborne's Letters has a little Eſſay on Grace, in which, after confeſſing the difficulty of expreſſing an idea when language does not ſupply us with proper words, he cloſes by ſaying, that "Sir William Temple may be conſidered as the firſt proſe author who introduced a graceful *manner* into our language."

Addiſon, in the 160th Spectator, ſays, "I believe we may obſerve, that very few writers make an extraordinary figure in the world who have not *ſomething* in their way of *thinking* or *expreſſing* themſelves that is peculiar to them and *entirely their own*."

Rouſſeau the poet, in his Epiſtle to Marot, obſerves of great writers,

"Chacun d'eux a SA BEAUTE PRECISE,
Qui le diſtingue, et forme ſa deviſe."

It is ſingular that De Foe, in his Eſſay on Projects, notices a *manner in writing*. Perhaps he borrowed the notion from the French critics; for it would be difficult to conceive what idea he and the writers of the laſt century formed of it, ſince no one then appears to have had a peculiar characteriſtic, or employed any of thoſe artifices of compoſition which conſtitute a *manner*.

learn to follow our predeceſſors that we may reach them, and, if we have the adroitneſs, we may then outſtrip them; a vulgar mind can only copy, a ſuperior mind in copying always becomes original. Among literary faſhions there once prevailed the cuſtom of imitating Cicero, it was carried to a laughable extravagance, and the correſpondence of men of letters was often long interrupted, becauſe ſome would require three or four months to write a letter of three or four pages.* Servile imitation

* Theſe ſcholars were denominated *Ciceronians;* and as we have ſtill remaining ſome of this claſs of pedants, I think the reader will not be diſpleaſed to have their character exhibited; it is ſaid with nearly as much truth as ridicule:

" It was laughable to obſerve thoſe pale and melancholy viſages deprive themſelves of every pleaſure, fly from the ſociety of the living, as if they were themſelves already dead, bury themſelves in the bier of their ſtudy, and refrain from every kind of reading, except the works of Cicero, with as religious a care as Pythagoras abſtained from the uſe of fleſh. Their libraries were only diverſified by the different editions of the works of Cicero. Their hiſtories were only thoſe of his life; and their epics only frigid narratives of his conſulſhip; the paintings and drawings in their galleries were only his portraits and actions. They had his head engraven on their ſeals, as well as on their hearts. By day and by night Cicero was the only object of their enquiries and converſations. They preferred the honour of collecting certain words, and arranging a round and nicely cadenced period, to the performance of the moſt generous action. When, at length, their painful vigils had attenuated their bodies with illneſs, they died contented, ſince they had augmented the number of the martyrs of Cicero, and appeared in their laſt agony to be leſs pleaſed with the hope of the aſpect

tation is cenſured by the very expreſſion; that to which I now allude is of a very different kind, and I proceed to deſcribe it.

This imitation is peculiar to an age of taſte. It is an enthuſiaſm caught from the inceſſant ſtudy of the maſters in compoſition; a ſenſibility and verſatility of taſte which receives the *manners* of every writer, and which reproduces their intermingled graces in it's own compoſitions. A writer who poſſeſſes this magical power, combines the varieties of his predeceſſors, and without being one of them is all of them. He rarely finds a reader worthy of himſelf, for to reliſh ſuch an author requires a delicacy and perception equal to his own; and it is leſs difficult to taſte the mere manneriſt, who has only one character, than the writer who combines ſeveral. A writer of this deſcription is indefatigable in the arrangement of his compoſition. A cultured imagination heightens his natural feelings, and in every part he exhibits the lighter graces and glowing ſtrokes of a brilliant art. He beſtows a freſhneſs and bloom on whatever has been frequently touched. No thought appears feeble or vulgar becauſe it is inveſted with an elegant dreſs, and an eaſy air. The effects of ſuch a compoſition are not immediately perceived, for much of the art of refinement conſiſts in conceal-

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aſpect of God than of the eternal preſence of this demon of eloquence."

Such is the portrait Colletet has drawn of theſe falſe imitators of Cicero!

ing, and not in obtruding, It is a ſilent beauty that ſteals on inſenſibly, it is Venus gradually riſing from the ſea; wave falls upon wave, beauty ſucceeds to beauty, till the whole enchantment of the figure is revealed.

A writer of this claſs catches inſpiration, in his ſolitary cloſet from the labours of others. He is the ſtudent who haſtens to Rome to meditate at the feet of it's ſtatues; he is the architect who combines in the edifices with which he adorns his native city thoſe graces which his eye had appropriated in foreign countries. *

The able vindicator of Milton againſt the infamous Lauder has this admirable obſervation on the preſent ſubject: "There may be ſuch a thing as an original work without invention; and a writer may

* Dionyſius of Halicarnaſſus, who has written with ſuch attic ſenſibility on literary elegancies, compares the brilliant and flowery ſtyle, in which ſuch writers often excel, to a living and limpid ſtream, which ever flows, and ever with the ſame facility; to a changeable ſilk, which exhibits at every glance all the delicacies of ſhades; and to a ſplendid painting, in which the colours ſo happily blend and ſweetly melt into each other.

The poliſhed ear of the ancients was ſo accuſtomed to whatever was finiſhed, and perhaps the felicity of their language firſt gave them a taſte for ſuch exquiſite refinements, that they would conſume hours in turning and returning a period. Of Plato it is recorded, that he re-wrote twenty times the ſimple expreſſion of "yeſterday I deſcended into the Pyræus," before he could ſatisfy his delicacy. Cicero balanced the members of his periods like notes in muſic, and reſerved for their cloſes that harmonious pomp of words, which, by the Greeks, was ſtyled, "magnificence of ſound."

may be an imitator of others without plagiariſm." Among painters it is not only permitted, but even applauded, to inſert a figure or groupe of figures, borrowed from another artiſt. Raphael, no more than Pope, paſſed over a happy hint, or heſitated to ſeize on whatever he found to be exquiſite. I know of no reaſon why writers are to be leſs favoured than painters.

Literary novelty appears, therefore, poſſible to be imparted to works of taſte, while there ſhall be preſerved a *manner in expreſſion*, a *manner in character*, and a ſkilful *imitation*. But two obſervations remain to be made; that there are *a falſe novelty*, and *exhauſted turns of expreſſion*.

The popular kind of novelty is gratified by irregular ſallies of the imagination. To this inceſſant demand of the taſteleſs public, many ingenious and great writers have fallen the victims. We have too frequently, in our country, pardoned eccentricity and incorrectneſs for ſome irregular corruſcations of genius. An affectation of novelty has often been calamitous to great minds. It has been a fertile ſource in ſcience of pernicious paradoxes, and in literature of monſtrous inventions. Pere Hardouin, known for his ſtrange opinions, was uſed to ſay, to excuſe them, that he did not riſe at four every morning to repeat what others had ſaid. He might have roſe much later and ſtill have been as ridiculous, for to follow the extravagancies of an idle imagination has great facility. Camoens, in his Luſiad, by a mixture of the fabulous deities with the Chriſtian theology, and Davenant,

venant, in his Gondibert, by the invention of a plan, repugnant to Homer and nature, are eminent inſtances. The temporary taſte of a vicious age has been fatal to genius, and we have loſt a fine poet in Cowley. To ſurpriſe is the great aim of art; but it is to be remembered that ſurpriſe is alike excited by beauty and deformity. We are ſurpriſed at the ſoftened graces of a Raphael; we are ſurpriſed at the fantaſtical ſtrokes of a Chineſe painter; but which inſinuate themſelves into our hearts, aſſume at every inſpection new charms, and create an enchanting and eternal deluſion!

That the *turns of expreſſion* may be exhauſted is felt moſt in an age of literary refinement. Some of our happieſt modes of diction occur at length ſo frequently that their beauty is loſt in their familiarity. At this period it is that the manners of a nation are luxurious and refined, and their defects are communicated to their ſtyle. To invent new thoughts is now moſt rare, and to invent new expreſſions is now moſt hazardous.

While we deviate not too widely from the models of art novelty may be communicated to our productions, and an originality be impreſſed on the moſt common objects. I give an inſtance: Equeſtrian ſtatues are commonly raiſed on a poliſhed maſs of marble, and ſurrounded by allegorical figures. When Falconet was invited to Peterſburgh, to form ſuch a ſtatue of Peter the Great, he repreſented the Emperor on a fiery courſer. This idea an inferior ſculptor might have ſeiſed: but it remained for this artiſt to throw over the performance

pable of energy, and often ſinking into torpidity? Without the vigour of hope, and without the exhilaration of enjoyment. Pope on the contrary was fortunate in every circumſtance of early friendſhips, of augmenting independence, and of that continued fervour of diſpoſition, which cheriſhed by patronage, knows no pauſe till the remoteſt excellence is graſped. In other circumſtances Dryden might have proved ſuperior to Pope, and Otway had equalled Shakeſpeare. It is a moſt judicious obſervation made by Helvetius, that it is not ſufficient to poſſeſs genius, to obtain it's title. One diſcovers, another improves, a third accompliſhes, and this laſt is ſaluted as the genius; although he has really not advanced the art, *in a greater proportion*, than his leſs fortunate predeceſſors.

All that the fineſt organiſation can impart in the preſent day, will never form one work of genius. The mere

natural

natural produce, of the moſt fertile individual, will now be only a pitiable indigence; for the opulence of the mind can now only be formed by ſtoring it with acquired knowledge; and the moſt valuable productions will be thoſe in which the induſtry of the mind has been moſt vigilantly exerciſed. The reſult of what we uſually term *natural abilities*, will reſemble the haws and berries which our ancient Britons might have conſidered as excellent fruit, but a modern Briton knows that the richneſs of our orchards has been borrowed from all the varieties of climate. Hence, pertinacity of meditation, becomes a commerce of the mind; it aſſembles and combines the ideas of others, but the ſenſations it experiences are it's own. We *learn* to think, by being converſant with the thoughts of others; but this is denied, ſince it is aſſerted that the thoughts of others encumber our own. He, how-

world, and that there is a ſexual diſtinction in this not contemptible ſcience, is a fact which an obſerver may diſcover in his private circle. Bruyere is a character more extraordinary among men than it would be among women; for I am perſuaded that there are many female Bruyeres not accuſtomed to write down their obſervations, and pourtray the characters of their acquaintance. Women of even a mediocrity of talent excel in the knowledge of their circle; and we may account for this curious circumſtance on the principle of their ſtationary ſituation in ſociety, where their opportunities for obſervation are more frequent, and where their perception becomes more exact, by an attention, which, though frequently interrupted by it's vivacity, is never entirely ſuſpended. I cannot affirm that they view diſtantly, or penetrate deeply. Their eye is a pleaſing microſcope, which detects the minuteſt ſtroke, if placed near, though incapable of tracing an object remotely. Many experience, and ſome acknowledge, what Rouſſeau relates of his Thereſa. This woman, whom he deſcribes otherwiſe as heavy and dull, afforded him excellent advice in the moſt trying occaſions. "Often" (ſays he) "in Switzerland, in England, and in France, amidſt the cataſtrophes I found myſelf, ſhe ſaw what I did not ſee myſelf; ſhe afforded me the beſt counſels to follow, and extricated me from dangers in which I blindly precipitated myſelf."

If, therefore, the female diſplays a ſuperior acuteneſs, derivable from the peculiarity of her ſituation, thoſe authoreſſes who appear jealous of certain

certain privileges attached to the wandering and active ſex cannot be deemed as the able advocates of their own; becauſe if woman (from the natural feebleneſs of whoſe organs is derived her beauty) were capable of exerting the ſame corporeal vigour as man, yet, by becoming his rival, ſhe would not only loſe that feminine ſweetneſs, that amiable debility, and that retiring modeſty which lend ſo much eloquent perſuaſion to her actions; but, what would not be compenſated by this violent and unnatural change, ſhe would loſe her actual poſition in the ſocial order which imparts her preſent ſuperiority, by enabling her to detect the ſecret foibles of man. To this, her ſtationary ſituation, I would attribute her acknowledged ſuperiority in converſation, and in epiſtolary compoſition. To both the female imparts a peculiar delicacy, and a charm of eaſe, which maſters of ſtyle can neither imitate nor rival. Theſe excellencies conſiſt in a volubility of happy expreſſion and a choice of ſprightly ideas; on the boſom of ſociety the female genius is firſt nurtured; the human ſcene becomes her ſchool; and hence ſhe derives this facility of language, and this liveline ſs and ſelection of ideas.

A more obvious advantage in the female character, is that ſuſceptibility of feeling, or facility of imagination, which, without doubt, is peculiar to the irritable delicacy of their fibres. The heart is the great province of the female; if we would attract their regard we muſt learn to reach the heart; all their finer qualities are ſo many ſenſations of the heart; and it is the heart which imbues

bues with it's ſoftneſs their every excellence. Their favourite amuſements are works of imagination and taſte, not of memory and reaſon; their logic conſiſts not of arguments, but of ſentiments; and I think that ſome ladies of extreme refinement, can put as much fancy, and exert as rich an imagination, in the ornaments of a favourite dreſs, as the poet employs in his moſt florid deſcriptions.

In every ſurrounding object they expreſs their love of the beautiful; their moſt uſeful inſtruments have a character of delicacy; and in a word, women would effeminate even the roughneſs of ſteel and the ſolidity of wood; man is ſubjugated by theſe adventitious elegancies, and the fair love to ſee that beauty admired in inanimate objects which they know muſt be much more in themſelves.

I am not ſurpriſed that in all nations, civiliſed or rude, whenever ſuperſtition prevailed, the female character has been regarded as an inſtrument of the Divinity. That peculiar animation which viviſies their lively perceptions has been conſidered as ſomething ſupernatural, and we can eaſily conceive that the afflatus of prophecy muſt ever have diſplayed a more touching illuſion in the agitated and picturesque countenance of a woman than in the more hard and labouring viſage of a prophet; I conceive that the Grecian Pythia, the Roman Sybil, and the Pythoniſſa of the Hebrews, muſt have communicated a more celeſtial inſpiration with their copious treſſes luxuriating on their palpitating boſom, their vivacious eyes, and their ſnowy

ſnowy arms, than even a paſſionate Iſaiah, or a weeping Jeremiah.

But to hiſtory, and not to declamation, I appeal. If we throw a philoſophical glance on it's inſtructive records, and have the diſcernment to read what often is not in hiſtory, we ſhall obſerve that the female character has ever had a ſingular influence on moſt of the great characters and great events of human life. One of the moſt favourite portions of the hiſtoric art, with hiſtorians, is an elaborate delineation of the characters of monarchs. We ſhould comprehend theſe much better if we were acquainted with thoſe of the Queens. Many important reſolutions of ſtate councils have been firſt made in the royal bed. It is an obſervation of the judicious Du Freſnoy, that a Queen has an influence on the King her huſband, and the King her ſon. And would it be difficult to ſhew, that if the whole affairs of government depend on a Miniſter, he would be impregnable againſt the attacks of a miſtreſs? A perſon muſt be very ignorant of ſecret hiſtory, whoſe memory cannot, at this moment, place in ridiculous and humiliating attitudes, ſome of the moſt illuſtrious ſtateſmen.*

Saint

* I ſhall notice two very eminent ſtateſmen: Cardinal Richelieu, to gain the affections of the Dutcheſs de Chevreuſe at their private interviews, viſited her in the moſt finical dreſs. Rejecting his ſcarlet robes and ſacred pantouſles, his eminence wore a faſhionable coat, an enormous plume, a long rapier, and tight pumps. The Dutcheſs hated and ridiculed the Cardinal, the Miniſter, and the Coxcomb; but at that moment through him ſhe conducted innumerable intrigues

Saint Evremond and Chefterfield, who excelled in the practical knowledge of life, forcibly expreſs themſelves on female influence at court. What epocha has not been governed by women? I confeſs that the female character has as ſeldom been heard on the public ſcene as the prompter of a theatre; or as rarely been viſible as the ſcene-ſhifters. The female character, like ſome other objects, derives all it's influence from concealment; in

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trigues within and without the kingdom. Read Plutarch's Life of Cicero, and you may obſerve that his wife Terentia was not leſs concerned than the orator and ſtateſman in the moſt ſtriking events of his public life. When Cicero was perplexed to know in what manner he ſhould treat the conſpirators of Catiline, Terentia incenſed him againſt them, and invented an ingenious prodigy to fix the vacillation of his agitated mind and cauſe him to act with an energy he otherwiſe had wanted. The origin of the enmity between Cicero and Clodius was owing to the jealouſy of Terentia, who knew that his ſiſter Clodia was deſirous of marrying Cicero. She therefore inſtigated him to attack Clodio. By the confeſſion of Cicero himſelf it appears, that Terentia was ever more ready to interfere in his public tranſactions than to communicate her domeſtic affairs to him. Catherine of Medicis was the wife of one king and the mother of three, whom ſhe alike conducted at pleaſure. It was owing to the interceſſions of women, ſays Bolingbroke, that Louis XIV. acknowledged the Pretender as King of England after the contrary reſolution had paſſed in council. A great Vizier, the pillar of the Ottoman Empire, ſolicited ſuddenly for his diſmiſſion, and thus ſpoke to his friend, who was ſurpriſed at his reſignation of ſuch power:—"By the God who created heaven and earth, the ſecret I now tell thee no one knows: for many years, Jemila Kandahari (the firſt lady of the bed-chamber to the Sultana,) has had the ſecret power of unlooſing whatever I tied, and tyeing whatever I unlooſed."

in politics, woman is terrible, not in the raſh imbecillity of the ſtorm, but in the ſudden exploſion of the mine.

Ancient and contemporary hiſtory will ever abound with multifarious inſtances of this kind; the celebrated confeſſion of Themiſtocles remarkably confirms this obſervation: "That little boy," (ſaid he, pointing to his ſon) "is the arbiter of Greece: for he governs his mother; his mother governs me; I govern the Athenians, and the Athenians govern the Grecians." Themiſtocles was a profound and honeſt philoſopher.

A learned friend obſerves, that theſe obſervations tend to prove that women command men becauſe men *love* women; but I take leave to add, that women command men frequently becauſe men *fear* women. The exceſs of their ſenſibility is obſervable in all their great paſſions; and the ancients appear to inſtruct us, when they picture their furies, as well as their graces, in the forms of women.* From the ſame enthuſiaſm is derived their excellent as well as their execrable qualities; their ſenſations admit of no cold mediocrity; they are at once more or leſs than human; they liſten to the voice of adulation till they ſink into idiotiſm; or they are animated by a fervour of glory till they are elevated into heroines.†

When

* It is an obſervation by Addiſon, that "the fair ſex are always the beſt or the worſt part of the world."

† Swift has caught this idea of female ſenſibility, and alludes to it in his Poem of Cadenus and Vaneſſa. The lines are the following ones:

"When Miſs delights in her ſpinnet,
A fidler may a fortune get;

A block-

When the love of glory warms the ſenſitive ſoul of a female, ſhe is, perhaps, actuated by a ſtronger impulſe than that which directs our leſs delicate feelings. A being agitated by a tumultuous and inflamed imagination, experiencing ſenſations, perhaps, unknown to us, half conſcious of her debility, yet conducted by a daring pride; burning to reach that *beau idéal* which we ſo liberally beſtow on her; to what height is ſuch a being not capable of ſoaring? Even her deficiencies become ſo many tender graces, and her very failings extort our applauſe. Women, like ſome men of the greateſt genius, have been remarkable for their extreme vanity, if we thus muſt term their love of glory; this glowing ſentiment is derived from an amplitude of ſoul. To what, but this paſſion for glory, can we attribute their partiality for men of genius? Their remarkable attachment to officers has formed a ſevere

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A blockhead with melodious voice,
In boarding-ſchools can have his choice,
And oft the dancing-maſter's art
Climbs from the toe to touch the heart:
In learning let a nymph delight,
The pedant gets a miſtreſs by't."

And Dryden, in his tale of Theodore and Honoria has ſeiſed a very lively ſtroke in the female character. Honoria, who had ſo long looked on Theodore with "four-eyed diſdain"—reſolved to marry him with all that rapidity of volition which characteriſes their inclinations. The lines are theſe:

"But ſhe with ſuch a zeal the cauſe embrac'd
(As women, when they will, are all in haſte)
Reſiſtleſs in her love as in her hate."

ſevere accuſation againſt the ſex; ſome have conſidered that it proceeded from their timid diſpoſitions, which make them regard with fondneſs the protecting arm of a brave man; but a ſenſible female has lately cenſured it, becauſe ſhe ſuppoſes that as theſe triflers are remarkable for their frivolous accompliſhments, and a deficiency in mental ability, they are therefore more on a level with women than any other claſs of men. The obſervation will oftener be true than falſe; yet we may ſometimes attribute the female's paſſion for military men to her violent love of glory. The obſervation is Bayle's; but it is given by Fielding, who at the ſame time adduces the ſentiment of the heroine of the Odyſſey, who "aſſigns the glory of her huſband as the only ſource of her affection towards him."

Women have been alſo frequently accuſed of an imprudent diſcovery of their concerns; but an important intereſt engages their ſilence. No great enterpriſe will ſuffer becauſe a ſenſible female unites her aid, and ſtimulates by her vivacity the torpid prudence of men. We want not for examples to prove that ſome of the greateſt conſpiracies have been confided to women, foſtered by their care, and accompliſhed by their zeal. The conſpiracy of Catiline was diſcovered by a female to Cicero, and Rome was ſaved! That againſt the wretched Caligula was well known to Quintilia, who, however, bore extreme torture rather than diſcover the ſecret Cabal. Du Freſnoy, a very learned reſearcher of hiſtory, has ſhewn that ſeveral

great conſpiracies have failed becauſe they were not confided to females; and has addueed numerous evidenees to prove, that whenever they were employed, they eonferred ſueeeſs on the enterpriſe. I am perſuaded that a female may not only have the faculty of preſerving a ſeeret, but alſo the dexterity of inventing what is worthy of being kept ſeeret at the eoſt of life.

Sueh has been the influence of the female eharacter in politics; nor has it been leſs apparent in religion.

The ladies have been more cloſely connected with religion than perhaps they are aware of. A new religion is congenial to their diſpoſitions, and not merely for it's novelty. There is a luxuriancy of fancy and a progreſs to ideal perfection whieh every new religion diſplays; it is honourable to their finer ſenſibilities that they are ever the firſt to incline to what appears ſo theoretically beautiful. It is not quite ſo honourable to thoſe who, pretending to ſuperior ſanctity, and even to inſpiration, have, for the promotion of the ſyſtem they wiſhed to eſtabliſh, artfully adopted the ideas moſt dangerous to the imaginations of women, and taught the love of God, aceording to the art of Ovid.

That the earlieſt propagators of new dogmas have had reeourſe to theſe inviſible, yet powerful wheels, in the machine of human nature, I mean Women, is not to be eontroverted. Let the Fair Sex be inveigled, and the religion is eſtabliſhed; a woman at leaſt ean bring her huſband, a miſtreſs the prime miniſter, a queen the ſovereign.

It

It is a curious obſervation made by ſome, who pretend to ſingular penetration in the ſcience of human nature, that the Chriſtian religion was greatly indebted to the patronage and the ſenſations of the ſex. Voltaire, who is not ſo ſuperficial as his adverſaries would make us believe, ſays, that half of Europe owes it's chriſtianity to Women, and Gibbons, who certainly had vaſt erudition, in his Account of the Monaſtic Life, after having mentioned the ſeveral inducements for entering into this unnatural ſtate, with more truth than politeneſs, adds, " that theſe religious motives acted more forcibly on the infirm minds of females." It is certain, that from the influence of the female character, we derive nearly all the prominent events of religious hiſtory. The firſt dominions of the Pope, and conſequently the origin of the Papal power, are the gifts of a lady. Gregory VII. had ſo lively an intereſt in the heart of the Counteſs Mathilda, that ſhe made a donation of all her ſtates to the holy ſee. Inſtigated by the eloquence of St. Jerome, the illuſtrous Paula forſook Rome, retired to the ſacred village of Bethlem, and founded ſeveral monaſteries. Pope Damaſus, who had found the chief part of the inhabitants of Rome adverſe to his intereſts, prevailed by intriguing with the ladies; and was ſo ſkilful in the arts of female flattery that he obtained the nick-name of *Matronarum Auriſcalpius*, the Ear-picker of the Ladies. To Torquemada, who had taken poſſeſſion of the mind of Iſabella of Spain (the beſt Spaniſh eſtate he could have ſeized on) the world is indebted for

the cruel inquiſition. And, in a word, Chriſtianity in England is derived from a French princeſs, who having married Ethelbert, firſt ſtipulated for the free exerciſe of her religion, and ſoon had ſuch influence on her huſband as to chriſtianiſe his idolatrous Saxons. To conclude, in the words of the poet:

> And Goſpel light firſt beam'd from Bullen's eyes.
>
> *Gray.*

It is thus that the female character has ever had an inviſible influence on two of the moſt important branches of human events, politics and religion. A ſuperiority of talent, in one reſpect, has produced this unvaried reſult. This talent conſiſts in a great knowledge of man, a ſuſceptibility of impreſſion, and a peculiarity of ſituation. In the domeſtic circle, the female is inceſſantly occupied in diſentangling or combining the paſſions ſhe obſerves or ſhe inflames. Her ſedentary life and her quietneſs of mind are little interrupted by that variety of purſuits to which the buſier ſex are devoted. Her circle is her empire; her commands, ſays Rouſſeau, are her careſſes, and her threats are her tears. Incapable, perhaps, of patient deſigns, her plans are rapidly conceived, and often fail, if they require a tedious proceſs of elaborate events. They are not deeply laid, but are adapted for temporary effect. The female attends to thoſe minute particulars, often unperceived, and generally careleſsly conſidered as unworthy of an elevated mind, but which often, adroitly managed, give a new

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and ſudden turn to important objects; and ſhe appears to know much better than man that little paſſions can produce great effects. For ſurrounding objects her perceptions are vivid; but ſhe cannot, with the preſcient eye of philoſophy, diſtinctly trace objects at a remote period. Her intellectual arithmetic can calculate as far as days and months, but extends not to years. She excels man in obtaining a preſent purpoſe; her invention is prompt, her boldneſs happy, and her execution facile; manly perſeverance proceeds with a cautious, firm, and gradual progreſſion. Let us conſider the ſexual advantages. The female can excite by legitimate eulogiums, and can correct by ſevere panegyrics; ſhe makes man exult or bluſh; ſhe can allure by a ſmile, ſhe can enchant by a touch, ſhe can ſubdue by her endearments! She overturns, or produces in an hour the labour of years. She has ever ſomething reſerved for the laſt effort; ſomething which has often degraded wiſdom into folly, and elevated folly into wiſdom, and which, while it can render activity torpid, imparts action to indolence.*

* The LITERARY CHARACTER of WOMEN, might *exceed* that of every Man who does not make ſtudy his profeſſion. Their employments are not unfriendly to *reading*: occupied at their delicate works, their avocations are ever more agreeably purſued while the circle liſtens to a reader; frequent readings of this nature, would render their taſte more lively, and their meditations leſs interrupted than among thoſe perſons whoſe ſtudies are caſual, and whoſe employments are inimical to thoughtful habits.

On the Alliance between Love and Religion.

THERE is a frame of mind ſo conſtituted that it becomes naturally religious; as it is certain that there are ſome temperaments which are naturally amorous. Religion has kindled it's brighteſt fervours in thoſe perſons who unite theſe ſenſations; and the purity of devotion has been deplorably corrupted, by the admixture of a violent paſſion for the ſex. He who loves religion, as religion ſhould be loved, deprived of the adventitious polities of men, and unſoiled by thoſe voluptuous imaginations which degrade the Divinity, will not cenſure this attempt to expoſe the danger which a feeling and feminine heart too frequently incurs, and which, while it appears to aſpire to celeſtial perfection is only the more firmly entangled in terreſtrial licentiouſneſs.

Has religion been attacked in her ſanctuary? Have the virtuous united with the criminal? Has the voice of nations ſanctioned the declamations of the impious? It is becauſe prieſts and religioniſts have undermined the edifice they were to guard and to inhabit. Among the terrible diſorders which have polluted "the holy of holies," one of the moſt ſtriking is this mixture of Love with Religion. This monſtrous union, even in the preſent day, perverts pſalms into philtres and conventicles into brothels; yet, as the ſame cauſe produces different effects on various minds, what inflames the

the pious with a burning devotion only warms the wit into grave raillery, while it animates the inſtructive execration of the philoſopher.

Poets are amorous, lovers are poetical, but ſaints are both. Religion, love, and poetry, are ſtreams from the ſame fountain; they are alike characteriſed by a certain tender melancholy, which ever accompanies the quiet intervals of an enthuſiaſtic fancy; while often there is a ſtage in theſe paſſions at which reaſon diſappears, and a continued or a temporary inſanity is prevalent; and among lunatics the greater part will frequently be diſcovered to be religious, poetical or amorous. The incurables unite the three paſſions. But, without further diſcuſſion, I ſhall arrange thoſe facts, relative to the preſent ſubject, which I have collected with ſome care and ſome curioſity.

The paſſion the Deity inſpires, is according to the conceptions we form of the Deity. The Chriſtian religion, in the perſons of Jeſus and the Virgin, ſet afloat a new train of ideas; and the amatory paſſions have been kindled, and the amatory language has been adopted.

In the preceding Eſſay on the Influence of the Female Character in Religion and in Politics, ſome obſervations, and ſome hiſtorical evidence are introduced on the amatorial intimacy of the early propagators of religion with the ladies. The genius of thoſe pious men ſurvived in their modern deſcendants, and women, it is ſcarce neceſſary to add, are always women. Thoſe handſome ſeraphs in France, who were called directors, and who had

nothing ghoſtly about them but their functions, retained the ſame extraordinary influence, and have performed miracles in the cauſe of religion and gallantry. The young devotees of our numerous ſects are not leſs ſenſitive; and while they blend with an exceſs of devotion all the intemperance of love, ſoften the groans of religious affliction with the ſighs of amorous pleaſure.

The Catholic religion is an academy of love. The effuſions of a Spaniard to the Virgin, and a repentant frail one addreſſing her prototype Mary Magdalen, with an "*ora pro nobis,*" employ language which comports as little with piety as modeſty. I have even heard a pretty Arian ſpeak, with ſome conviction, of the Divinity of Jeſus, after having read the beautiful deſcription of his perſon in Joſephus; and which was interpolated by ſome monk, who well knew that even the Son of God would come recommended to the ladies by the charms of his perſon. The illuſtrious pious are always repreſented as beautiful; from the oriental obſcenities of Solomon, the Jewiſh Ovid, to the groſſneſs of Zinzendorff, and the indecencies of Whitfield.

The union exiſting between Love and Religion nowhere appears clearer than by the confeſſion, ſaid to be made by Mahomet; that the pleaſures of the ſex rendered him more fervent in prayer. In love, as well as religion, he muſt have been an adequate judge, for he was a Turk, and a prophet; the firſt ſuppoſing a great experience in ſenſual pleaſures, and the other in ſpiritual delights. He promiſed

for

for the reward of piety a bevy of immortal beauties; every prophet, like every phyſician, has recommended that ſyſtem to their patients which they found moſt agreeable to their own feelings. But I cannot perceive that the opinion of Mahomet at all differed from that of a Chriſtian Saint, Catharine, who obſerved, "how unhappy muſt be the ſtate of the damned, ſince they are no longer capable of *loving!*"

To purſue our ſpeculation with ſomething like hiſtorical regularity, we may obſerve, that David and his ſon are not leſs celebrated for the number of their Pſalms and Proverbs, than for their Concubines. It is fortunate for them that we have no ſecret memoirs of thoſe days; we know, however, ſufficient; and indeed we could not expect great regularity of manners in men who were at once poets, lovers, and ſaints. Glancing into the early ages of Chriſtianity, I paſs over an anecdote of no leſs a perſon than the Author of the Chriſtian Creed, who is ſaid to have concealed himſelf, for a conſiderable time, in the embraces of a favourite devotee; but Saint Athanaſius aſſures us, that during the whole time he lay hid in an empty jar. Proceeding to a later period, we diſcover the amatorial ſpirit to be ſo congenial to religion that public marriages were ſolemniſed between ſome eminent characters and a favourite ſaint. Pope Pius V. was publicly united in matrimony to Saint Catharine; and the author of his Life aſſures us, that this ancient lady kiſſed him, and preſented him with a ring of her own hair. Tanchelm of Antwerp pub-

liely eſpouſed an image of the Virgin Mary, and with no inconſiderable portion; for having placed two boxes near her, to receive the voluntary contributions of the numerous ſpectators, the women were ſo faſcinated with the idea of a nuptial ceremony, that, alike animated by love and religion, they tore their necklaces and ear-rings to preſent them to the Virgin and her Tanchelm.

Deſcending to a later period, we obſerve the ſame cauſe operating the ſame effects. The ſingular inſtitutions of chivalry, illuſtrate the alliance between the two paſſions. The learned Saint Palaye has obſerved, that the firſt leſſons of chivalry related to the love of God and the ladies; that is, religion and gallantry. "The ladies," he ſays, "taught them, at the ſame time, their Catechiſm and the art of love." It was in the genuine ſpirit of chivalry that Boccaccio returned thanks to God and the ladies for the ſucceſs of his agreeable and licentious tales. Boccaccio at length became ſo voluptuous in his indulgence of love, poetry, and religion, that this unfortuate man of genius was ſeiſed by the terrors of the prieſts, and appears to have cloſed his days in the lunacy of Catholiciſm.

From the twelfth century to no remote period nothing pleaſed in devotion but what was combined with love. Romances were filled with religion as well as religion with romances. They haſtened to confeſſion to find lovers, and having found lovers, probably perceived it neceſſary to return to confeſſion. The learned Lenglet du Freſnoy comes here to my aſſiſtance. Writing on the romances

romances of this period, he obſerves, that "Jeſus Chriſt and Apollo, Cupid and the Holy Ghoſt, Venus and the Virgin, went hand in hand in the early productions of this kind." Of theſe works one only is printed, which is the celebrated Roman de la Roſe.

The primers of the pious were at one period ſo many votive offerings to love. In the reign of Henry III. of France moſt great men had theſe religious manuals illuminated with ſubjects from the Sacred Writings, in which were introduced the portraits of their favourite minions and miſtreſſes. Charles V. had a miſſal painted for his miſtreſs of a ſimilar deſcription; it was ornamented by figures depicted by Albert Durer, and the ſubjects were not leſs extravagant than licentious. So poſſible is it to be fervent at once in love and religion, that the Queen of Navarre, in one of her novels, notices a Prince, who, going to his uſual aſſignation with the lady of a counſellor, always ſtopped to pray in a church which he paſſed; her Majeſty highly applauds his devotion, as well as his paſſion; and adviſes all true lovers not to neglect the duties of religion.

Several curious publications might be mentioned compoſed by pious perſons. Of theſe modern works none is more ſingular than the Life of Marie à la Coque, not inelegantly written by an Archbiſhop of Sens. This woman was a viſionary, who, having over-heated her brain by the peruſal of religious works, and the rigours of penitential faſts, betrothed herſelf to Jeſus. From her own narrative

tive the Archbiſhop compoſed this pious romance, in which the whole progreſs of her celeſtial amour is traced in the ſtyle of a circulating-library novel. We have a copy of amatory verſes which Jeſus wrote to his new ſpouſe, and ſcenes are deſcribed with great lubricity of imagination. It is certain this ingenious Archbiſhop could not have believed the reveries he wrote; but he well knew that ſuch fictions, delivered as truths, would have a great effect with the devotees, and it muſt be confeſſed, that the Pariſian Belle was charmed to worſhip a deity, ſo much reſembling *un homme du grand monde*. Similar publications abound in French and Spaniſh literature; and it has been obſerved by ſome of their caſuiſts, that they always found the greateſt ſinners made the greateſt ſaints; the reaſon is not difficult to diſcern, ſince ſuch ſanctity is in proportion to the criminal imaginations of the religioniſt.

Even the ceremonies of religion, both in ancient and in modern times, have exhibited the groſſeſt indecencies. Prieſts, in all ages, have been the ſucceſsful panders of the human heart, and have introduced in the ſolemn worſhip of the Divinity, incitements, gratifications, and repreſentations, which the pen of the hiſtorian muſt refuſe to deſcribe. Often has the ſenſible Catholic bluſhed amidſt his devotions; and I have ſeen chapels ſurrounded by pictures of laſcivious attitudes, and the obſolete amours of ſaints revived by the pencil of ſome Aretine. At this moment there exiſts a conſiderable traffic of *certain* waxen figures, in ſome

parts of Calabria, which a royal edict in vain attempted to abolish; and it is urged in it's favour, by the priests of the neighbourhood, that in no part of Italy are the young devotees so fervent in prayer, and so obsequious to the instructions of the priest.

In religious solitude, these confused notions of Love and Religion perplexed the wavering and debilitated heart of the pious Recluse. On the burning pillow of the Monk hovered phantoms of melancholy lust; his fancy was the scourge of the furies, and of the innumerable visions with which these men were disturbed, they were ever accompanied by the seducing form of a beautiful female, and the day was passed in contrition for the temptations of the nightly demon. Their homilies were manuals of love, and the more religious they became, the more depraved were their imaginations. In the nunnery the love of Jesus was the most abandoned of passions, and the ideal espousal was indulged at the cost of the feeble heart of many a solitary beauty. Several manuscript diaries have been preserved of these amiable fanatics, in which the embraces and sensations of spiritual love are not distinguishable from those of a material nature. An eternal meditation on the same object, terminated frequently in the horrors of delirium; and when the soul, by a ceaseless inquietude, had accustomed itself to be penetrated with the love of Jesus, while all other ideas faded and vanished from the mind; it sunk in the stupor of imbecility, and could alone occupy itself by this solitary idea. Tissot has given a case

a caſe of this nature; a young woman having yielded herſelf up to all the extravagance of love and religion, during ſix months that he attended her, ſhe could only articulate at intervals, "my beloved Lamb, come to my arms!"

We muſt now turn our obſervations to a conſiderable portion of the religious world, who, known under various denominations, may be claſſed under the generic title of Myſtics. The ancient Platoniſts appear to have reſembled the modern Myſties; they carried theſe united paſſions to a great perfection; yet it is clear that the Platoniſts trembled to gather the celeſtial palms of religion, on the precipices of love. John Norris, a celebrated Engliſh Platoniſt, in his "Theory and Regulation of Love," conſidering all vices and virtues as the various modifications and irregularities of love, maintains this principle: that the love of God ought to be entire, and excluſive of all other loves. This ſingular diſtinction could never have entered into the imagination of any perſon, excepting that of a lover and religioniſt; but, without doubt, the author had found it among his female Platoniſts as a principle very neceſſary to inculcate.

The Myſtics were enamoured of the ſweet union. Of theſe, Antoinette Bourignon is among the moſt celebrated. She perſuaded ſome, and, what is more ſtrange, is ſuppoſed to have perſuaded herſelf, that ſhe received the viſitations of the Divine Spirit! Her opinions became ſo faſhionable that they were propagated in this country, and Leſley thought

thought proper to publiſh an elaborate refutation of her errors. We are told ſhe was endowed with an extraordinary gift of chaſtity, and which, ſhe informs us, had been frequently attempted; ſcandalous reports were on the wing, and ſhe anticipated them. She, like other female ſaints, aſpiring to be eſpouſed to the Son of God, was deſirous the public ſhould know that ſhe was not incapable of attracting ſeveral young men. The faſcinating ardours of theſe Myſties prevailed over the gentle mind of the virtuous Fenelon, who onee rendered a man of fine genius ridiculous to all Europe by his patronage of Madame Guyon. The ſage author of Telemachus wandered in his retirement, ſtudious of her "Spiritual Guide," her "Short Way," and her "Torrents." The imagination of this lady was not of the moſt chaſte nor of the moſt beautiful kind, yet it was certainly imagination, and it's wild fervours overpowered the ſuſceptible ſoul of Fenelon. By the alchemy of his own fine genius he turned obſcenity into purity, and incoherenee into regularity. How are we otherwiſe to account for this ſingular faſeination?

The ſame genius characteriſes our female Methodiſts, who haſten to their Chapel, as the faſhionable to the front rows of the Theatre. An extraordinary neatneſs of dreſs diſtinguiſhes a devotee, and, while ſhe ſings a tender pſalm, the warmeſt tears, and the moſt voluptuous ſighs atteſt her ſenſibility. An intrigue too often eommences in a pew: and I do not know why the magiſtrates, who are empowered to proſecute the venders of obſcene publieations,

publications, permit the hymns, the diaries, and other rapturous effuſions of our fanatics. Theſe are the Ovidian touches of the kitchen. Where are to be found, as among all ſimilar ſects, an equal number of lovers? If one part of Aſcetic Chriſtianity threatened, if univerſally adopted, to depopulate the world, the other, of Myſtic Chriſtianity, appears reſolute in rectifying that political error; and perhaps no ſociety ſo ſmall as that of Methodiſm has produced to the State, ſo many additional members.

This cloſe alliance between Love and Religion, many writers have noticed, without accounting for it; and the greater part have only ventured to expreſs their aſtoniſhment, and to doubt the fact. A great obſerver of the human character enquires if the heart can conciliate ſuch oppoſite paſſions, and admit ſuch incompatibilities? But we ſee that the paſſions are not oppoſite or incompatible; ſince libertiniſm has been one inſtrument which the hand of prieſts has employed for the purpoſes of religion. It is acutely obſerved by Monteſquieu, that a Myſtic is only mad, devout, and licentious. But we may alſo add, that the delirium has often only conſiſted in the expreſſions which theſe perſons adopt; and all the extatic viſions they notice are ſometimes only ſo many metaphors by which they conceal their libertiniſm of mind. The Methodiſts of the laſt century (for Methodiſm is an old folly with a new name) employed all this devotional cant. The father of our immortal dramatiſt, probably far gone in Love and Religion, thus expreſſes himſelf in his will, "I bequeath my ſoul to be entombed

tombed in the ſweet and *amorous* coffin of the *ſide* of Jeſus Chriſt!" Even elegant minds, adding to the orgaſm of poetry that of religious extacy, employ the ſtyle of the moſt plaintive and tender lovers. Racine the ſon, in his Poem on Religion, has many ſuch touches. He engraved under his crucifix the very expreſſions Tibullus has addreſſed to his miſtreſs. The Latin poet ſays:

Te ſpectem, ſuprema mihi cum venerit hora,
Te teneam moriens, deficiente manu.

Which Racine thus adopts, in addreſſing Jeſus:

Que ta Croix dans mes mains ſoit à ma derniere heure,
Et que, les yeux ſur toi, je t'embraſſe et je meure.

In an epiſtle, ſuppoſed to be written by the famous Abbé Rancé, of La Trappe, the alliance between Love and Religion is well marked in the following verſe:

Je n'avois plus d'Amante, il me fallut un Dieu.

Our ſublime Milton, who, as he was a great poet, and no inconſiderable fanatic, muſt have been, no doubt, a warm lover, appears alſo to have conceived that the rewards of a future ſtate can only conſiſt of amatorial pleaſures. This curious paſſage is in the Paradiſe Loſt, book v. verſe 612. Adam is thus converſing with the Angel:

"To love thou blam'ſt me not, for *love*, thou ſay'ſt,
Leads up to heaven, is both the way and guide;
Bear with me then, if lawful what I aſk;
Love not the heavenly ſpirits; and how their love
Expreſs they, by looks only,' or do they *mix*
Irradiance, virtual or immediate *touch?*

I will

I will not fatigue the reader with additional confirmations of what I have advanced. I ſhall only obſerve, that the enthuſiaſt Rouſſeau, who certainly was a poet, though he wrote in proſe; a lover of exquiſite ſenſibility, though he married his laundreſs; and pious, though he wrote againſt the clergy, perceived the union which has paſſed under our examination. In one of his notes to his delicious Romance, he obſerves, "That the enthuſiaſm of devotion borrows the language of love; the enthuſiaſm of love borrows the language of devotion."

As ſome have blamed, while others have commended the ſubject of this paper, I ſhall now cloſe with a ſhort quotation from Biſhop Lavington, who would not have heſitated to acknowledge the truth and juſtneſs of this ſatire. That pious writer ſays, "I am much miſtaken, and ſo is Hiſtory too, if ſome of the warmeſt and moſt *enthuſiaſtic pretenders to the love of God,* have not entertained the ſame *violence* of paſſion (not quite ſo ſpiritual) for their *Neighbours.*"---Enthuſiaſm of Papiſts and Methodiſts compared, vol. 1. p. 57.

FINIS.

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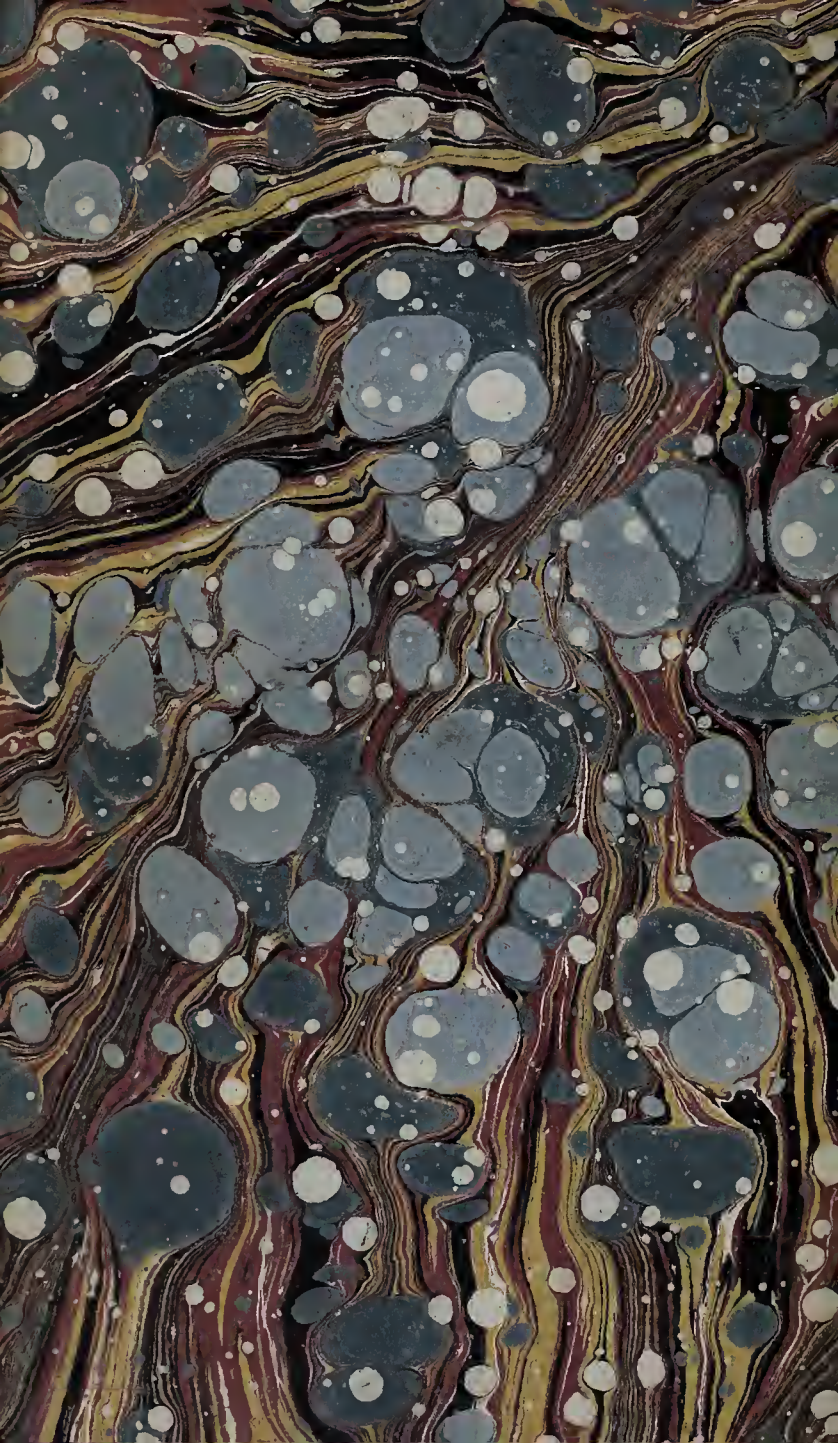

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